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JULY/ AUGUST 2002

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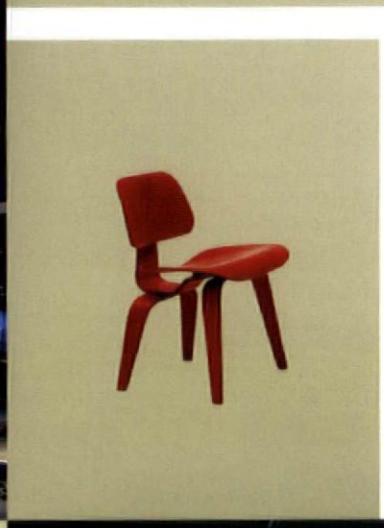

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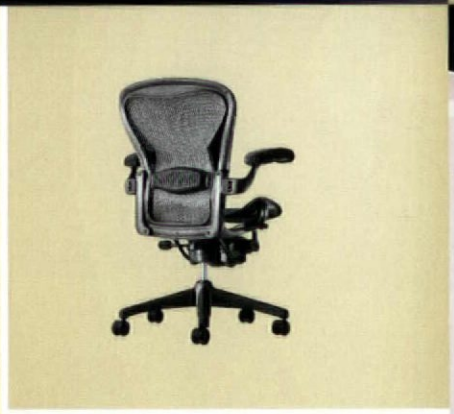

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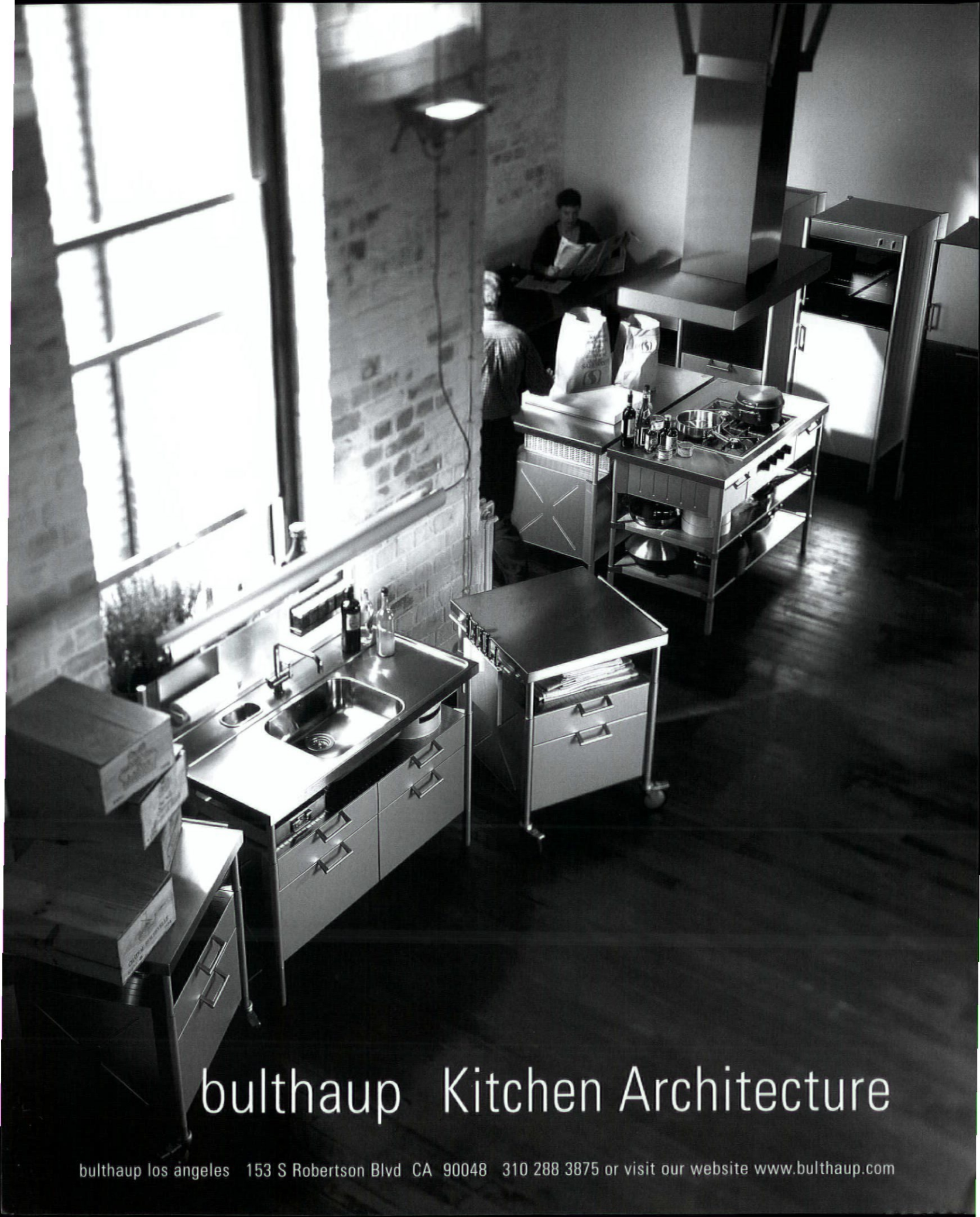
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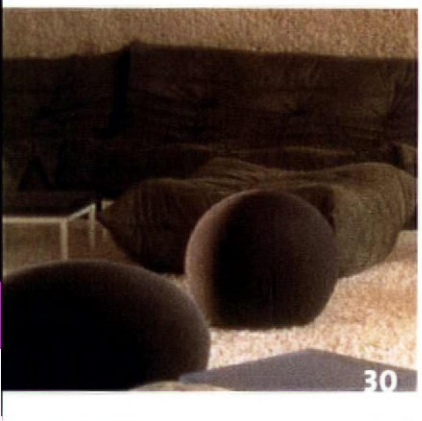

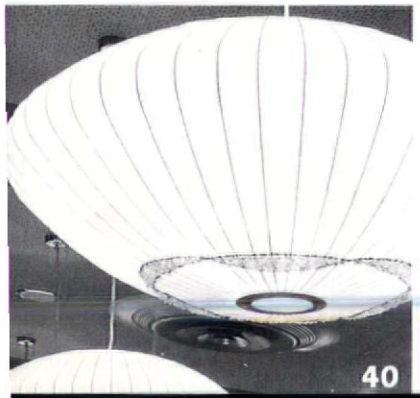

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Subscriber Service: Tel 800•956•7734; Fax 818•956•5904. E-mail: subscribe@balconypress.com

LA ARCHITECT (ISSN 0885-7377) is published bi-monthly by Balcony Press, 512 E. Wilson, Ste. 306, Glendale, CA 91206. Postmaster: Please send address changes to LA ARCHITECT, 512 E. Wilson, Ste. 306, Glendale, CA 91206. All rights reserved.

Subscription: Rates are as follows: $30/year. (AIA/LA and AIA/PF members subscription included in membership. Single copy price $5.95.

Submissions: Every effort will be made to return material submitted for possible publication. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. The publisher will not be responsible for damage or loss.

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JOHN ENGLISH currently works as a cultural resources consultant for Myra L. Frank & Associates in Los Angeles. For the past ten years he has been an active member of the Los Angeles Conservancy's Modern Committee, where he has helped preserve many landmarks. He has designed tours for the National Trust, The Society for Commercial Archeology, The Society of Architectural Historians, the UCLA Italian Department and the Yale School of Architecture. John is a board member of the Los Angeles Conservancy and is a founding board member of the A & D Architecture and Design Museum Los Angeles.

JACK LAXER is an international travel and architectural photographer, a/v producer, lecturer, and inventor who has been based in Los Angeles for over 30 years. Using 3-D and conventional cameras, he documented the work of Armet & Davis, among others architects, from the 1950's through the 1970's. His work was honored by the LA Conservancy at a recent IMAX theatre showing. With extensive work for international and domestic tourist offices, as well as major commissions from Kodak, Nikon, Olympus and Minolta, Jack continues to lecture and shoot around the world.

ELIZABETH MARTIN is Creative Director of Alloy Design & Technology, a multi-disciplinary firm working in integrated building, new technology, and craftsmanship. In addition to her private practice, Liz is the Director-Curator of the newly launched A+D Architecture and Design Museum at the Bradbury Building.

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editor's note

THIS ISSUE OF LA ARCHITECT IS DEDICATED to interiors. The subject of interiors is vast—buildings, people, objects, countries and governments all have them. Architectural interiors encompass both the shared and the private, and possess the ability to include and excluded. They effect how we eat, sleep, work, learn, worship and celebrate. Even sitting in my car on a packed freeway at rush hour, sheltered and protected (albeit a bit frustrated and impatient), I am intrigued by the comfort and contentment I feel in being encased.

Exterior and interior space form a unique bond. Interwoven and interdependent, the power each yields has its own inimitable effect. In analysis, exteriors are usually evaluated by visual perceptions (yea or nay on the building's aesthetics), whereas interiors have the added challenge of how people react to (psychologically) and feel (emotionally) inside the space. Some interiors mimic their exteriors, some deny them and others blur them. Whichever prevails, our first impression of a building is usually from the outside, often leaving us with the mystery of what lies within.

By nature an interior is about containment. Womb-like and nurturing, it encompasses and encloses and can have a profound effect on our psyche. The balancing act between form and function applies as much to the inside as the outside. Bottom line, people want to feel good in a space.

The contents of this issue are as wide in range as the subject itself. Common threads of novelty and originality run alongside the storylines as each blends function and commerce with comfort and aesthetics. All have a healthy mix of traditional culture and radical innovation.

LAURA HULL
EDITOR

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news
PEOPLE + PROJECTS

VENTURI RETROSPECT

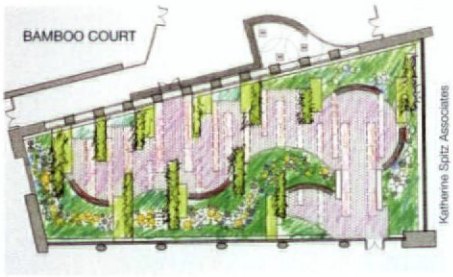
Out of the Ordinary: The Architecture and Design of Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates continues at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego in La Jolla. Returning to the building they renovated in 1996, the husband wife team is the subject of a large retrospect including drawings, models, photographs, videos and furniture. Also highlighted is a multi-media installation called *The Architect's Dream* created for the exhibition by VSBA. MCA San Diego, 700 Prospect Street, La Jolla, 858-454-3541.

Our First Maggie!

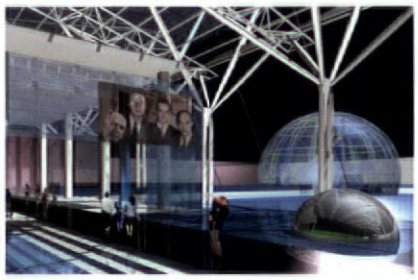
Honoring excellence in the publishing industry, a 2002 Maggie was awarded to *LA Architect* for the November/December 2001 issue, "Finding a Voice: 8 Emerging Designers," topping over 1800 entries. For over 50 years Western Publications Association (WPA), a non-profit trade organization dedicated to championing excellence in publishing, has hosted the competition in over 100 categories ranging from editorial and design to promotion.

Healing & Landscape

Can landscape architecture add healing power to a hospital stay? In conjunction with architectural firm **Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership,** the landscape architecture firm **Katherine Spitz Associates** is designing a series of gardens for the new UCSD Cancer Center. The gardens include a Health Sciences walk for patients and care givers that has curves and intersections similar to those of DNA structure. Sensitively designed to the needs of cancer patients, a series of Healing Gardens will be planted with zero fragrance and full foliage for privacy and contemplation. Several additional gardens and bike paths are planned as well as a central Bamboo Court and roof deck Mesa Garden, both integrated into the design of the buildings.



Katherine Spitz Associates



Plutonium Memorial Winner

Michael S. Collins, Senior Design Partner with GDS Architects in Pasadena, was named the second place winner in an international architectural competition sponsored by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, located in Chicago. A total of 150 international entries were received for the "Plutonium Memorial Design Contest", a competition calling for a memorial/repository for nuclear weapons plutonium. The entrants were asked to create a public memorial that would also safely store plutonium. Collin's design incorporates a variety of reflective steel orbs that securely house the radioactive plutonium in water. In addition Collins placed 24,110 orbs along a timeline called the "Wall of Half-Life" that represents each year of plutonium's half-life. The winner of the contest was Michael Simeon of San Francisco.

News

United States Gypsum Company (USG Corporation), inventors of the revolutionary drywall panel Sheetrock, is celebrating their 100th anniversary. The innovative material was patented in 1917. The LA Chapter of the Urban Land Institute has awarded its "Star of Excellence" to William Feathers of **Feathers Executive Search,** "in recognition of his years of leadership in developing programs for ULI". Helen Watts, formerly serving as vice president, director of corporate marketing at Nadel Architects, Inc. in Los Angeles, is the newly appointed vice president of marketing for **Interior Space International** (ISI). Rick Overly, AIA, of **Perkowitz + Ruth Architects'** Newport Beach office has been named senior associate of the firm.

Scholarship + Competition

The Study Centre of the **Canadian Centre for Architecture** in Montreal is accepting applications for its three to eight month visiting scholar program. Established to encourage research in the history and theory of architecture, the Study Centre will provide stipends, private offices, and administrative and research support. The CCA library houses 200,000 monographs and over 1,500 serial subscriptions. Applicants must hold a PhD or have a proven record of scholarly accomplishments.
For further information: www.cca.qc.ca/studium.

Pamphlet Architecture, the publisher of small, affordable booklets aimed at encouraging young architects and writers, is holding its second of three planned competitions. Designed for "unknown" or unpublished architects, designers, theorists, urbanists, or landscapists, the winning submission will be granted $2500 to develop a proposal. The resulting manuscript will be published by Princeton Architectural Press as Pamphlet Architecture 24. Deadline for submissions is September 1, 2002. Information: www.pamphletarchitecture.org.

Note: The MAK Center's *Houses x Artists*, an exhibition previously announced in our March/April issue, has been postponed until January 2003. In its place the center presents *Gerald Zugmann: Blue Universe, Architectural Manifestos by Coop Himmelb(l)au*, See "Backpage" for details.

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books

Reviews by Michael Webb

Rationalism and Whimsy

Concrete Regionalism

(CATHERINE SLESSOR) ISBN 0-500-28227-7

Cool Construction

(RAYMUND RYAN) ISBN 0500-28267-6

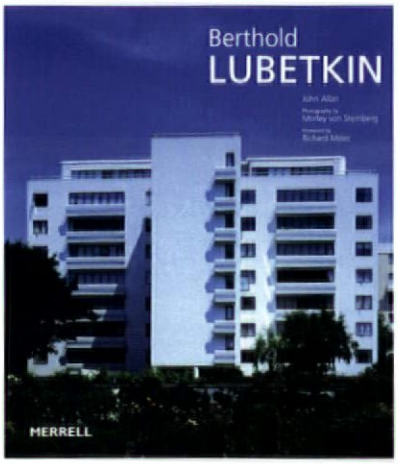
Radical Tectonics

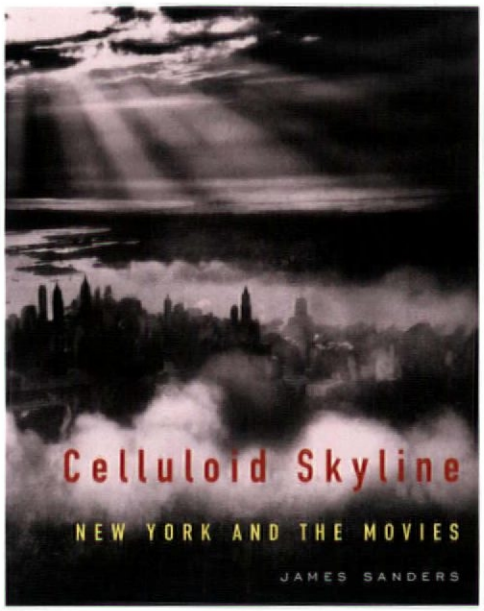
(ANNETTE LECUYER) ISBN 0-500-28266-8

Techno Architecture

(ELIZABETH A. T. SMITH) ISBN 0-500-28232-3)

The first four volumes in the new 4x4 series, each of which features four works by four comparable architects. The concept of linkage is interesting, the four critics achieve an admirable synthesis, the price is right, and the books are full of useful information, plans and excellent photographs. Sadly, their accessibility has been compromised by a wildly self-indulgent designer who squandered eight pages on headline type, overlaid body type with shadow typography, and jammed in far too many miniscule images and discordant typefaces. It's a lesson in how *not* to lay out a book and may scare away potential buyers. The persistent will be rewarded by graceful writing, especially by the peripatetic Dubliner, Raymund Ryan, and Catherine Slessor, executive editor of the *Architectural Review*. For the record, the architects covered are, in order: Antoine Predock, Tadao Ando, Wiel Arets and Ricardo Legorretta; David Chipperfield, Waro Kishi, Eduoardo Souto de Moura, and Tod Williams & Billie Tsien; Jones Partners, TEN Arquirtectos, RoTo, and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson; finally, Enric Miralles, Gunter Behnisch, Mecanoo, and Patkau Architects.



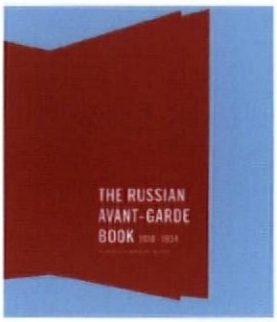


Celluloid Skyline

(JAMES SANDERS. KNOPF, $45 HC) ISBN 0-394-57062-6

Billy Wilder remarked that he preferred Paramount's version of Paris to the real thing, and he might have said the same about New York. In the good old days before television and jumbo jets, most people relied on Hollywood for images of exotic places, and New York always played a starring role as the archetypal big city. The earliest American movies were filmed on New York streets and in skylit lofts, but this documentary view of the city was soon superseded by fanciful portrayals created on the sound stages and back lots of Burbank and Culver City. In this mesmerizing account of cinematic New York, Sanders brings the eye of an architect and the sensibility of a film buff to examine how the city was evoked, in studios and on location, from tenement to penthouse. From *King Kong* and *On the Town*, to the irreconcilable perspectives of Woody Allen and Martin Scorsese, the legacy grows year by year, and we are fortunate to have so generous and perceptive a guide.

The Russian Avant-Garde book, 1910–1934

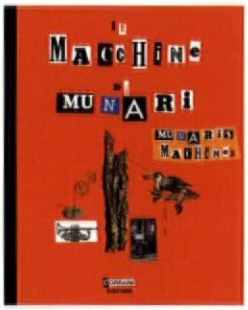


(DEBORAH WYE AND MARGIT ROWELL. ABRAMS, $65 HC) ISBN 0-8109-6224-1

This companion volume to a major MoMA exhibition is a treasury for graphic designers and bibliophiles, but it also provides a fascinating portrait of artists who began by spitting in the eye of the bourgeosie, became zealous stalwarts of the revolution, and finally reverted to the status of outsiders, as Stalin's apparatchiks snuffed out every trace of invention. The earliest work has a child-like spontaneity—crude sketches on cheap paper illustrating tiny editions of poets' work. There's a gradual shift to abstraction in the work of such masters as El Lissitsky and Rodchenko, and finally a slide into the banality of socialist realism. A fascinating portrait of artistic struggle and defeat.

Munari's Machines

(CORRAINI EDITORE/DAP, $25 HC) ISBN 88-87942-14-5



Bruno Munari was a gadfly designer who produced a stream of witty inventions in postwar Italy up until his death in 1998. These include a "chair for brief visits" in which the polished aluminum seat slopes sharply downwards. Much of his work was directed towards children, who had a keener appreciation of his talents than most adults, and this book of fantastic mechanisms is a fine example. Here you can learn how to tame an alarm clock, sniff artificial flowers, and play the pipe even when you are not at home. Explanatory texts, translated from the Italian, and marvelous drawings. A perfect present for kids of all ages up to 80.

Berthold Lubetkin

(JOHN ALLAN. MERRELL PUBLISHERS, $60 HC) ISBN 1-85894-171-7

In contrast to the terminally trendy 4x4s, this monograph has the clarity that characterized the long career of a legendary modernist who left the Soviet Union as a young man and settled in London in the early 1930s. There he designed the celebrated Penguin Pool and other enlightened zoo buildings (animals were more ready to embrace progressive ideas than humans), the controversial Highpoint apartment blocks, a model health center, and some exemplary social housing. Idealistic and rational, Lubetkin was anything but dour—though he was often constrained by meager municipal budgets. Few architects matched his brilliance in turning staircases into spatial adventures, or have used ramps as well as he did for the penguins. And few would have had the wit to respond to public criticism of austerity in the first Highpoint as he did by placing Greek caryatids under the entry canopy of the second block, thus enraging his humorless peers. Lubetkin was one of many brilliant east European émigrés who brought civilization to the backward West, and he is aptly celebrated here in a spirited text, a foreword by Richard Meier, and handsome new photographs.

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Rocking Noguchi

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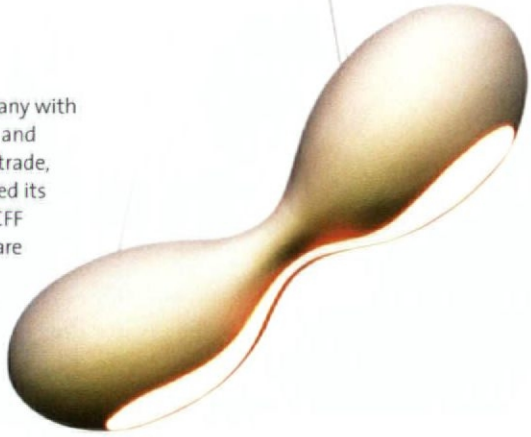
Water Colors

Pittsburgh Paints introduces "*Pure Performance*", the first environmentally progressive, premium-quality paint to earn the Green Seal Class A Certification. Used on the restoration of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater®, the company initiated the *Voice of Color*®, a collection of hues inspired by the Wrightian palette.

Jube Jube

Hatched from a parent company with 60 years designing furniture and lighting for the luxury yacht trade, Canadian-based Lolah debuted its new collection at the 2002 ICFF with Jube Jube, an earthenware pendant light (halogen and adjustable) that hangs alone or cascades in multiples. www.lolah.com



Driade Cooks

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Pepler Rugs

When English furniture designer Gordon Russell needed rugs in the 1930's, he turned to architect-trained Marion Pepler. Reissued by Christopher Farr in his new LA showroom, the collection of nine handknotted, handspun wool and mohair rugs are available in standard and custom sizes. 310-967-0064, 748 N. La Cienega Blvd.

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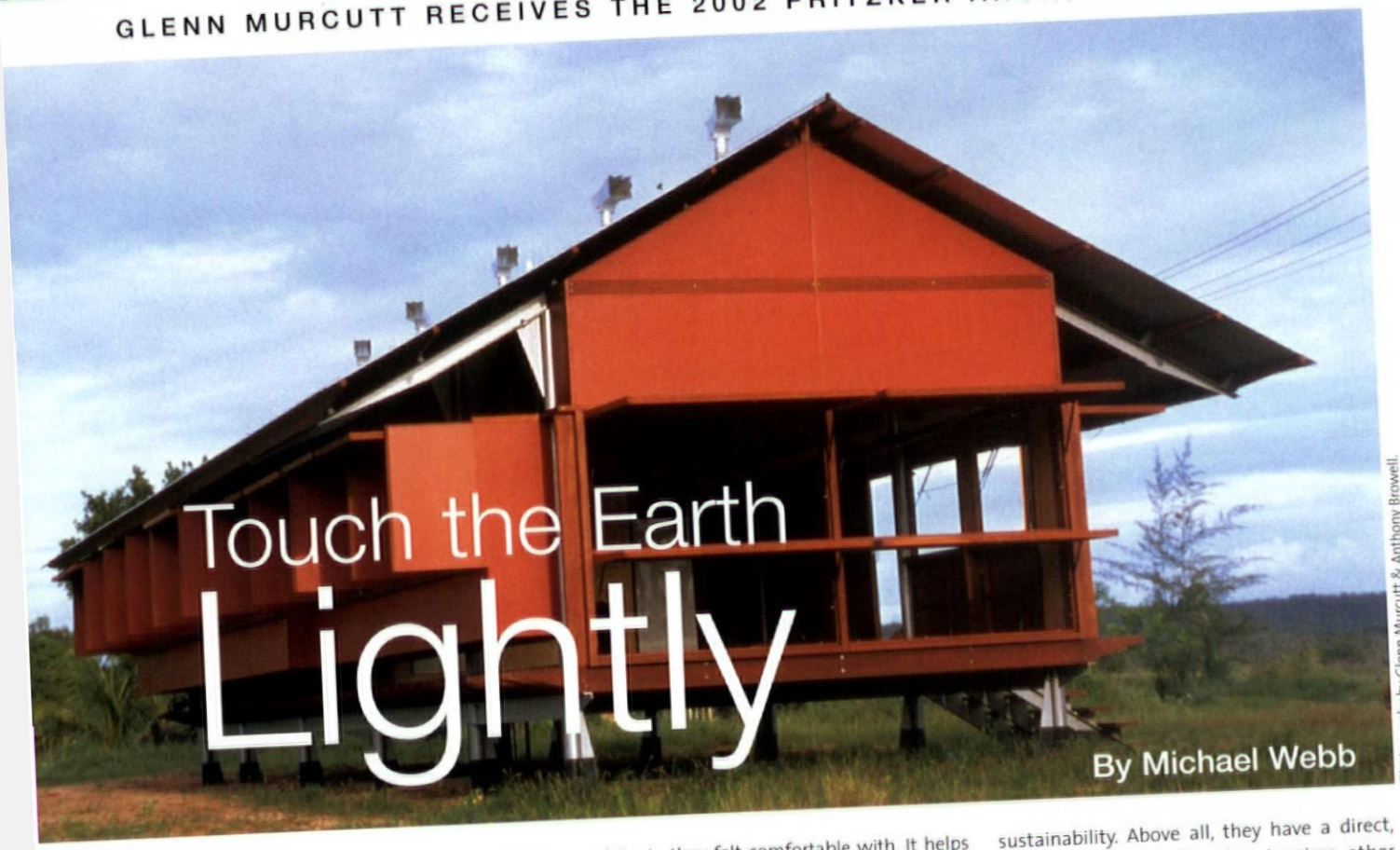
profile

GLENN MURCUTT RECEIVES THE 2002 PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE



Touch the Earth Lightly

By Michael Webb

Photography by Glenn Murcutt & Anthony Browell.

Most architects would love to have clients waiting in line for their designs, but in the unlikely event that occurred, they would promptly hire staff to eliminate the backlog. Across the Pacific in Sydney, Glenn Murcutt prefers to do everything by himself, one job at a time, and admirers of his brilliantly crafted houses wait for years to have him shape their lives. As a teacher, he travels the world; as an architect, he stays close to home and builds only in his native Australia. It is this quiet, unpretentious, high-principled architect whom the Pritzker jury selected as its latest laureate, and never was an honor more richly deserved.

At a time when awards for excellence, life achievement, or pretty faces are scattered around like confetti, the Pritzker Architecture Prize has weight and resonance. The suits began to take Frank Gehry seriously after he won in 1989—it put him into the company of architects they felt comfortable with. It helps that the Hyatt Foundation energetically promotes the award and hosts ceremonies in symbolic locations like Monticello, Versailles, and, this past May, Michelangelo's Campidoglio in Rome. That draws attention from beyond the profession and builds public respect for the art of architecture—something the AIA has miserably failed to achieve. Most importantly, the Pritzker Jury, headed from the start by J. Carter Brown, has always reached beyond the usual suspects, and has ranged the world in search of talents that deserved the spotlight.

Murcutt was an inspired choice. As an admirer of Mies and the Australian homestead, he infuses the vernacular with precision and artistry, and makes refined use of everyday materials like corrugated steel. His houses—and a few larger buildings—have a spiritual dimension. "To touch the earth lightly," is a phrase he borrowed from the Aboriginal people of Western Australia, and many of his buildings are raised above the ground. They are responsive to climate and provide models of sustainability. Above all, they have a direct, simple, artless quality that inspires other Australian modernists, though none can match the infinite subtlety of Murcutt's work.

The jurors' tributes are eloquent. "Glenn Murcutt has become a living legend, an architect totally focused on shelter and the environment, with skills drawn from nature and the most sophisticated design traditions of the modern movement," wrote Ada Louise Huxtable. And Jorge Silvetti found that his architecture "surprises first, and engages immediately after because of its absolute clarity and precise simplicity—a type of clarity that soon proves to be neither simplistic nor complacent, but inspiringly dense, energizing, and optimistic."

It's unlikely that the Pritzker will change Murcutt in any way, and one hopes his phone will soon stop ringing off the hook. For, like a Living National Treasure in Japan, he has earned the right to keep to himself and do what he does best.

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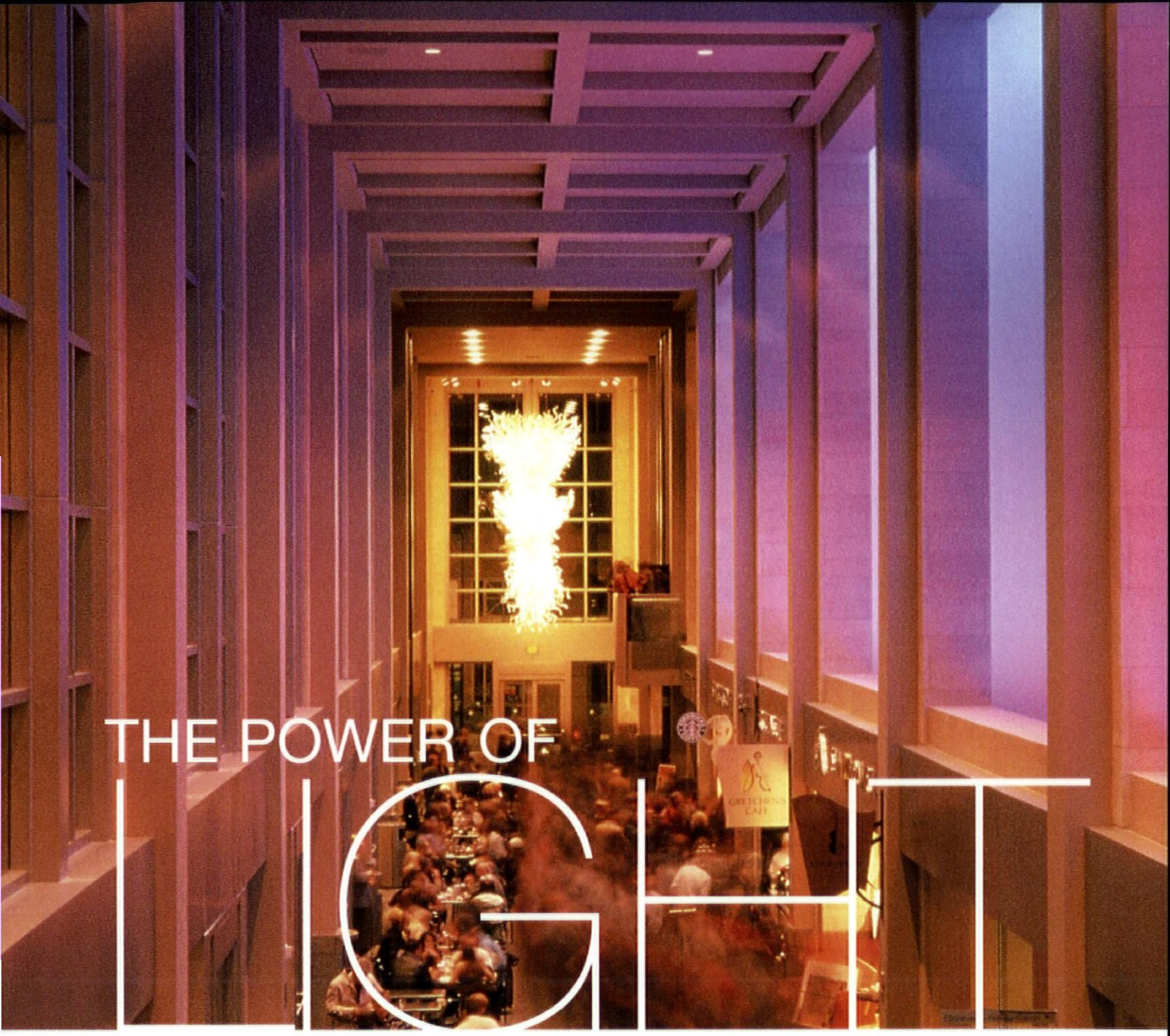

THE POWER OF LIGHT

A profile on **TEAL BROGDEN**
By **ELIZABETH MARTIN**

IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY, FUELED BY THE EMERGENCE OF NEW FILAMENT AND LAMP technologies, the separate fields of electrical engineering and theatrical lighting merged, creating a new profession—architectural lighting design. On the one hand, engineers are foot-candle oriented, and tend to design efficient lighting systems that meet building codes; on the other hand, theatrical designers are appearance and mood oriented, and tend towards high drama. Perhaps this is the appeal of the profession; very few fields challenge both sides of the brain so completely. As the profession matured, designers such as Howard Brandston, Lesley Wheel, Paul Marantz, and Randall Whitehead pushed the state of the art to new levels. The firm Horton Lees Brogden grew out of this and continues to enjoy great success as one of the true pioneers in the field of lighting design. >>

Above: Benaroya Symphny Hall. Photography by Lara Swimmer.

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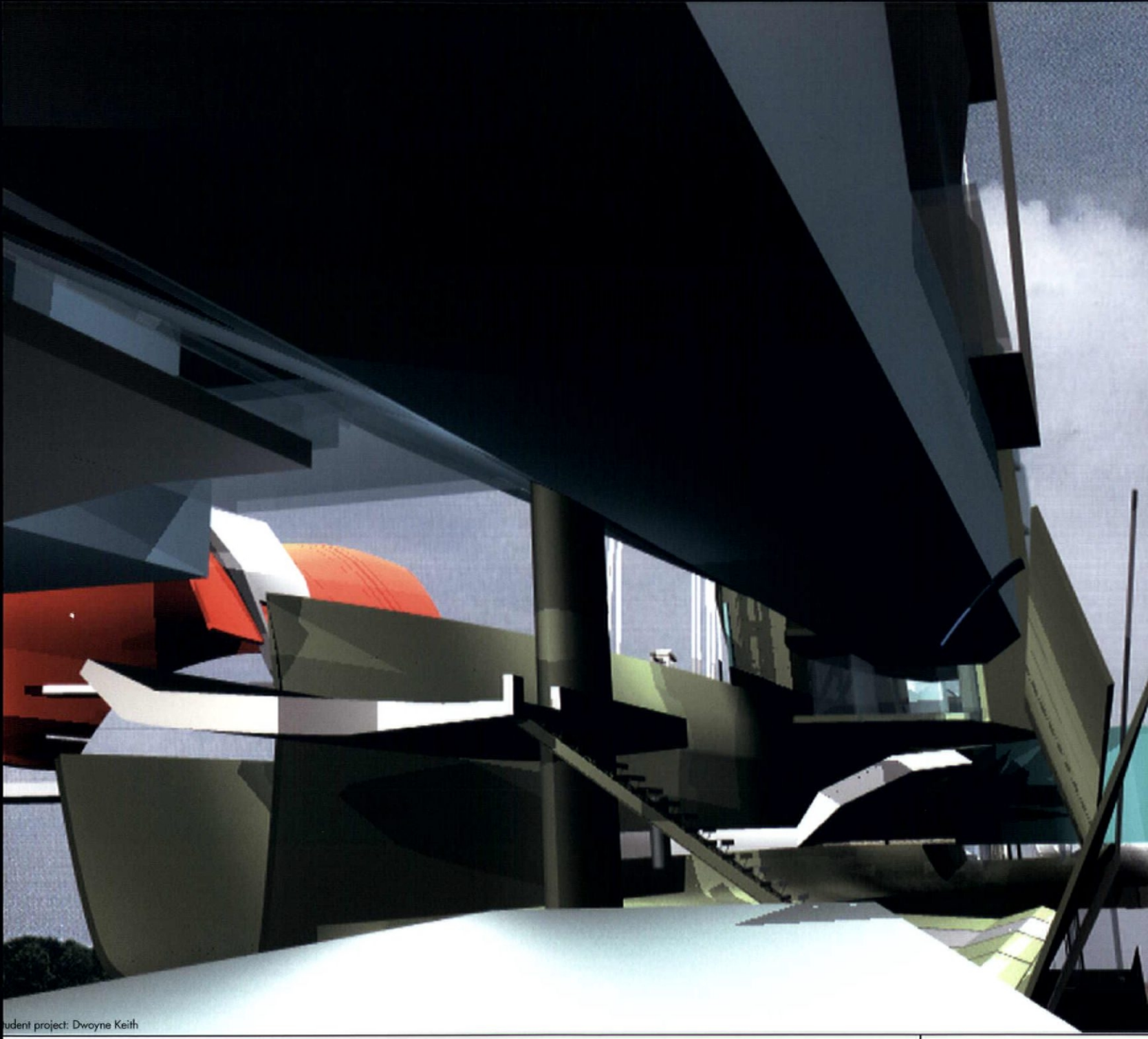
Building a strong presence in Los Angeles for Horton Lees Brogden, Teal Brogden has worked on a diversity of projects ranging from boardrooms to convention centers. At a recent WESTWEEK lecture, when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, Brogden answered "an orchestra conductor." Fortunately for us, Brogden claims she's tone deaf, but the passion for orchestrating magical environments through experimental lighting is in her soul. "Lighting design is about being able to—like an actor—create a character by marrying the technical and emotional aspects of any given space towards an inspirational goal," says Brogden. In practice, she is guided by the idea that design creativity is as important as technical expertise. For most of us, lighting is oftentimes the invisible design element within a space; something you take for granted. But for Brogden, lighting is a powerful tool that impacts one's perception. It can be distracting and filled with personality in one space, and in another, so subtle you do not realize it is there.

In her early years of electrical and lighting apprenticeship, Brogden worked in New York for the renowned firm Fisher Marantz. One of her first jobs was the renovation of the Rainbow Room at the top of Rockefeller Center. She then worked on the Four Seasons Restaurant with architect Philip Johnson. In the mid-eighties, at the time Brogden graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in architectural engineering, these opportunities were there for the taking.

From New York, Brogden migrated west to San Francisco to work with Horton Lees and spear headed the opening of their Los Angeles office in 1994, adding her name to the company. Brogden's work, throughout her career, has been punctuated by collaboration, an essential element of her design and technological process. Her in-house design team is a close-knit studio that keeps in constant working contact with their sister offices in New York and San Francisco. This collaborative philosophy spills into every aspect of Brogden's work both residential and commercial, including the Ahmanson Theatre, Staples Center and City Hall, to name a few. On working with architects, she remarks, "In essence, lighting designers respond to the architects they work with; the most successful projects that I have seen are ones where the architect managing the overall project is actually interested in lighting and becomes involved in the process".

For lighting designers in the late '80s, color was the hot new tool. In the late '90s the focus was sustainability—the green side of renewable lighting and the impact of energy. Brogden's predictions for the near future? In the next few years the direction will move towards more expanded services. As the stigma of a lighting designer creating product wears off, designers are expanding to provide a broader range of expertise. Whatever the forecast, Teal Brogden sees her mission firmly entrenched in the creation of magic. And with Brodgen's touch, light indeed has the seemingly magical power to transform objects into environments and environments into experiences.

Left: MTA, Hollywood/Highland station. Right: Conference room, Ground Zero. Both photos by Tom Bonner.



udent project: Dwoyne Keith

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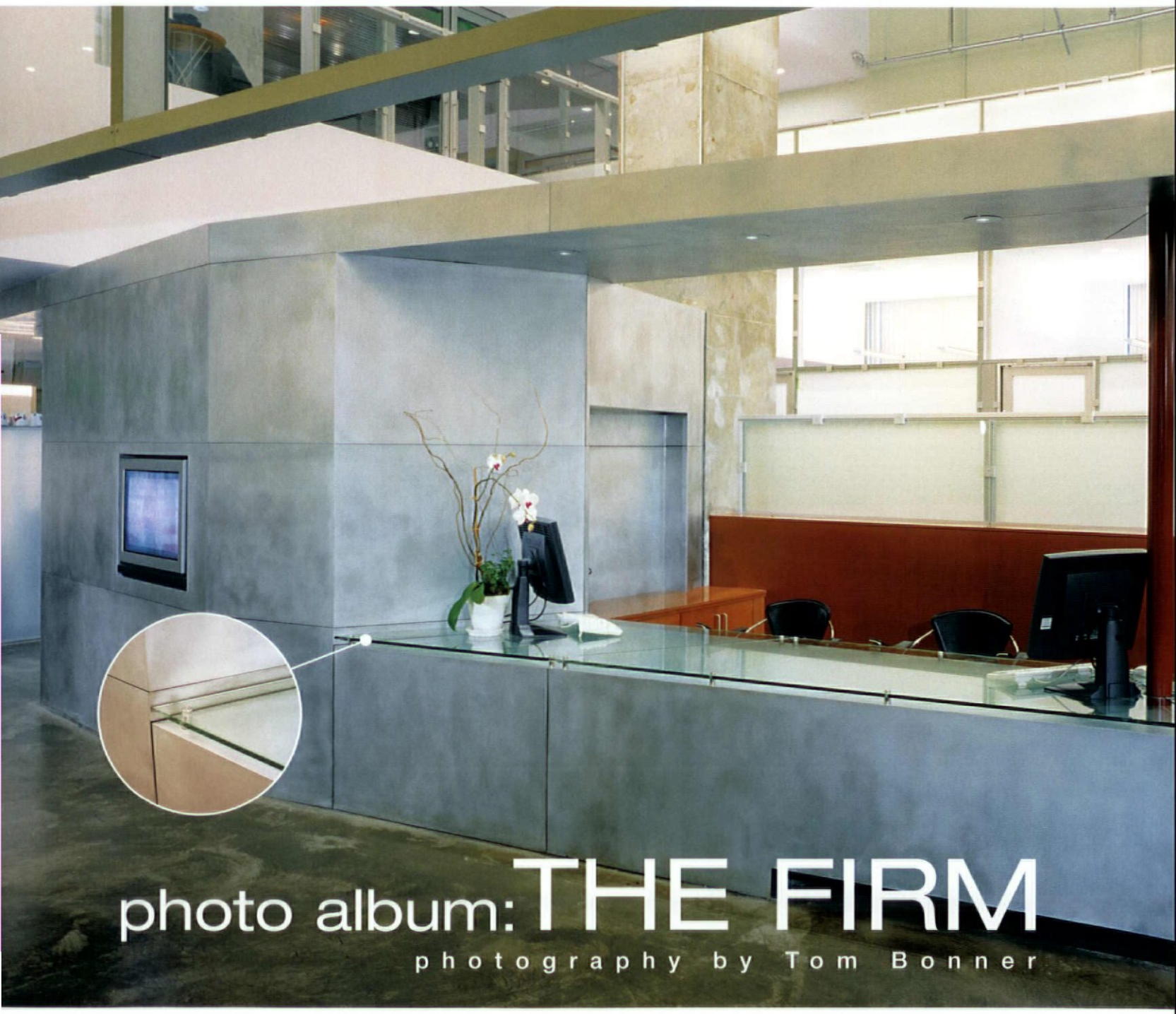


photo album: THE FIRM

photography by Tom Bonner

CLIENT: The Firm
international entertainment and brand management
ARCHITECT: Shubin + Donaldson Architects
CONTRACTOR: Sierra Pacific Constructors
MEP: Simon Wong & Associates
SE: D.T.A. Consulting Engineers
LIGHTING: Lighting Design Alliance

An EXTRAORDINARY-ORDINARY Mix of Materials

By Morris Newman
Photography by Benny Chan

XAP CORPORATION

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE WALL OF THE CONFERENCE room at XAP Corporation appears to be wrapped in something soft and deeply textured. The walls look knotted and nubbly like a Berber wool rug. A closer glance reveals the truth: instead of wool, the wall is actually a relief of plaster beads, produced by pushing the liquid goo through a sheet of perforated metal. Bright sunlight completes the effect with stipple-like shadows. "It's just the back side of a lath-and-plaster wall," said design architect Larry Scarpa matter of factly about this visual discovery. And if the lath-and-plaster seen from the rear is a discovery, it is still not pretending to be anything other than what it is: When we enter the conference room, we see the smooth, finished wall. "In our work, we like to find the point where the ordinary and the extraordinary meet," says Scarpa.

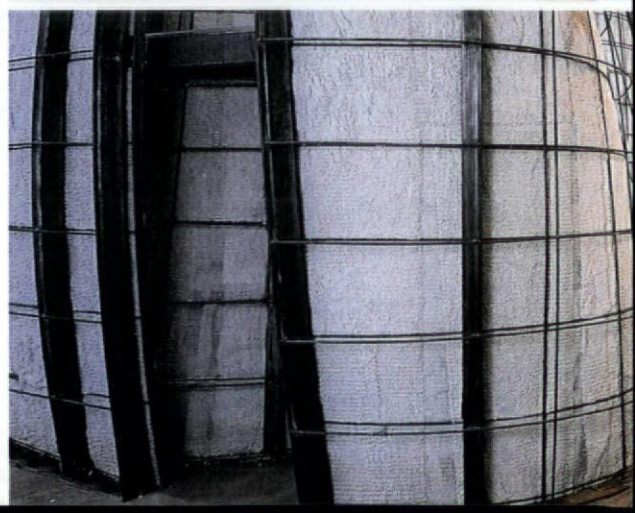
There are a number of extraordinary-ordinary moments in this 20,000-square-foot interior for the Culver City-based software maker. One is a 30-foot-high length of the building's steel moment frame, which pierces the reception desks like an exclamation point. Another is homesote, a fuzzy material best known as carpet underlay, that becomes both a decorative element and sound insulation when hung on the walls of individual work stations. Another normally hidden material, Dakota burl, a composition board made of sunflower seeds and crushed walnut shells, receives a polymer finish and becomes the surface of the desk of XAP President and CEO Allen Firstenberg.

The practice of elevating humble building materials into finish conditions has a long tradition in Los Angeles, stretching back (at least) to Richard Neutra, and extending through the bare plywood and chain-link fencing of middle-period Frank Gehry. For the XAP interior, Scarpa adds a wrinkle to the practice by favoring materials that are typically hidden. "It's like psychoanalysis," says Scarpa, half-teasingly. "It's about exposing parts which we don't think about, but are present nonetheless, like the cavity with in a wall."

Repression is also a part of psychoanalysis, and Scarpa has chosen to hide some things as well, such as the air-conditioning ducts. The building, designed by Eric Owen Moss for the Conjunctive Points business park, features an old-fashioned, industrial, saw-tooth ceiling that maximizes day lighting. The straightforward wood detailing remains uncluttered by ductwork, because Scarpa has chosen to hide the air-handling system in the side walls.

Scarpa's interior for XAP makes an interesting comparison with Shubin-Donaldson's interior for Ogilvy & Mather next door. Both are orderly and serene interiors for outwardly energetic, even aggressive buildings. XAP is particularly serene, as is appropriate for a software company, with a low level of ambient light and gray-toned furniture. Sight lines through the interior are largely uninterrupted. Scarpa, in fact, said he wishes he could have inserted more volumes inside the interior, but was constrained by the patriarchal taboos set down by Moss and the developer-owners, Frederick and Laurie Smith: nothing is allowed to touch the ceiling, except from the perimeter walls. Given the rich possibilities in section offered by the sawtooth ceiling, that must have seemed like a lost opportunity to the interior architect.

Scarpa still found ways to create distinctive gestures in the XAP office, however. Perhaps the most notable is the reception desk, an enormous, prismatic object made of poured-in-place concrete and skewered by the moment frame. At 18 feet, the desk is long as a Cadillac and, adds Scarpa, "probably weighs as much." The rocket-like shape of the desk seems vaguely reminiscent of the elevation of the Stealth building by Moss, which stands nearby. Scarpa said no resemblance was intended—not consciously, at least.



LIENT/OWNER: XAP Corporation
ARCHITECTS: Pugh + Scarpa
PRINCIPAL IN CHARGE: Lawrence Scarpa
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Hinerfeld Ward, Inc.
WOODWORK/CUSTOM CONCRETE: Image Woodworking
STEEL FABRICATION: Beinks Welding

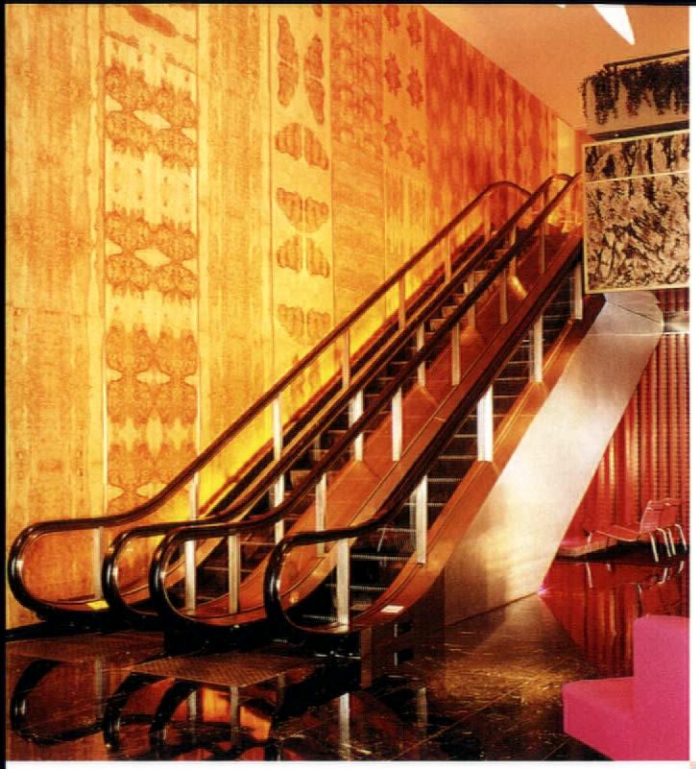
Andre Balazs and his Lobby Culture

BY MEARA DALY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM STREET-PORTER

LOBBYING FOR STYLE

Vladimir Kagan sofa–lobby Downtown LA Standard.



see four hundred and fifty feet through the building, or on the terrace in the East Court and look almost that distance across the lobby, through the Dining Room and on toward the Santa Monica Mountains and the sea." Its bar, the Cocoanut Grove, became a hub of celebrity activity and hosted the first Academy Award Ceremony.

So what makes lobby culture tick today? Perhaps the most successful entrepreneur in the field (at least in Los Angeles proper) is Andre Balazs, owner of the Chateau Marmont, The Standard, and the newly opened Standard in downtown. Balazs, who promoted nightclubs in LA and New York in the 80's, has successfully aimed his hotels at the wealthy and budget-minded sophisticated traveler. Although comfy rooms and multiple amenities are never to be dismissed, what transforms a hotel into a 'scene' is the lobby and the success of a lobby space ultimately arises from its embrace of its clientele. Like the Ambassador in its hey-day, all four of Balazs' hotels draw a celebrity crowd.

Balazs became known in Los Angeles for his renovation of the Chateau Marmont in the early 1990's. The Chateau Marmont is a Loire Valley retreat gone Hollywood and its appeal lies in its seclusion just off the busy Sunset Strip below. Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, Robert DeNiro all patronized the hotel. When Balazs began staying there in the

Left: Lobby escalator, Downtown LA Standard. Below: Front desk area, Downtown LA Standard.

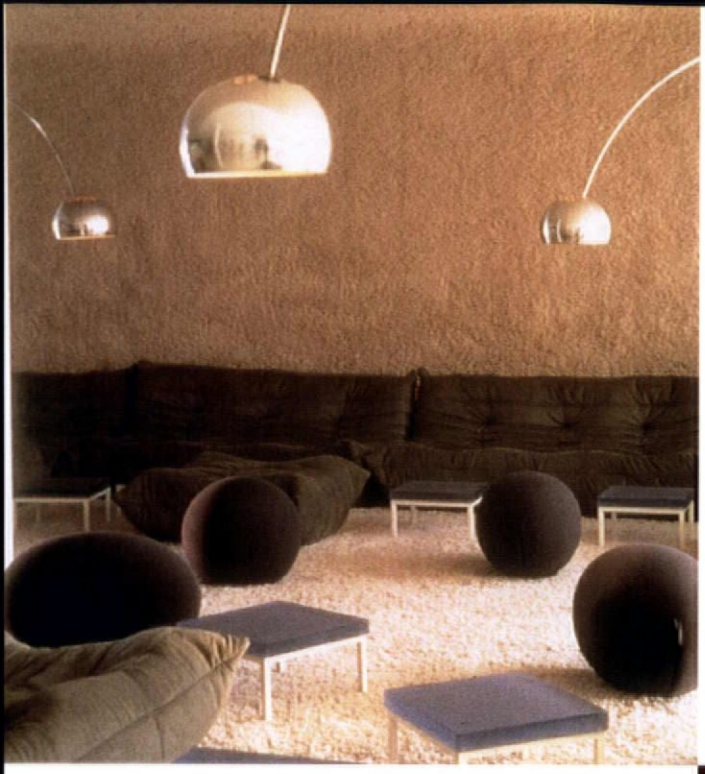
THE HOTEL LOBBY. THE THOUGHT IMMEDIATELY brings to mind soaring ceilings and richly decorated rooms that inspire a sense of awe or simply a relief from the grind of traveling. But in the hustle cyber-bustle of today, the hotel lobby has become somewhat of an LA phenomenon. The soaring ceilings and rich décor have been replaced with a trend setting sleekness whether retro or ultra-slick-cool. From the Mondrian by Phillipe Starck to the W in Westwood to the Avalon by Kelly Wearstler, the hotel lobby has become chic once more.

Historically, celebrities, writers, film producers, artists and designers have congregated in intriguing lobby spaces designed by leading architects since the turn of the century. Perhaps the most infamous hotel was the Ambassador, a Mediterranean-inspired design by architect Myron Hunt. It opened to great fanfare in 1919 and was touted to transform Los Angeles into the "Paris of the West." According to Hunt, "Three things distinguish the hotel proper. First, the H-shaped plan with flaring corners, letting the sunlight into every room; second, the method of planning which provides a window in every bathroom; and, third, the great feeling of space given by the arrangement of Lobby, Dining Room and Ball Room, so schemed that it is possible to stand on the stage of the Ball Room and

late 1980's the hotel was on the brink of ruin. By purchasing and renovating the Chateau he felt that he could celebrate the history of the place while stripping away the detritus that had accumulated over the years. In a 1996 interview he remarks, "The main lobby was not properly thought out as a real living room. Private conversations were impossible. For many years nobody had thought about how the hotel should feel, about how people should feel at home there." To this end, Balazs moved the main entrance away from the garage and gave the hotel a grander sense of arrival. This idea of feeling at home, of being embraced, is the common theme in all of Balazs' hotels and nowhere has it been more realized than the Chateau, where countless personalities still flock for that home away from home.

While the lobby of the Chateau is of the past, the lobby of its neighbor, the Standard, is solidly of the future. Balazs dove into the voyeuristic nature of the Sunset Strip to create a witty Mid-Century Modern décor gone to funk. Originally built in 1964 as the Thunderbird Hotel, the building had been converted to a retirement home when Balazs bought it. Working with a team of designers including Hollywood production designer Shawn Housmann, Balazs created an arrangement not unlike Hunt's Ambassador except the focus is the lobby, bar, and pool patio. Walking into the lobby off busy Sunset

Below: The Standard, Los Angeles.



Balazs was able to design a lush entry that contrasts with the slightly serious lobby. Softer chairs reside in a setting that is reminiscent of Paley Park in Manhattan and conversation pit is sunk into the concrete patio. A fireplace surrounded by a pool of water is the focus of the pit and evokes the comfort of a living room. Inside the main lobby, a 125-foot pink sectional couch designed by Vladmir Kagan snakes through the black marble, wood panel, and mirrored glass space to create conversation zones of varying heights and sizes. The scene is fused with its own café, pool table, and DJ booth. Rather than the ususal rooftop pool with cabanas, Balazs created a second lobby that wraps around the top of the building. Relaxing in the large bar area, pool, fireplace, or conversation nooks visitors are entertained by art house videos projected on a nearby building. Much like Hunt's desired sightlines to the sea, Balazs' roof provides a view straight out to the ocean and east towards New York.

For Balazs, the lobby "is the essential part—it represents the single event that sets the tone of the hotel." And although he seeks to create a sense of comfort and familiarity, ultimately he is creating a new lobby culture. In vying for the in-crowd, Andre Balazs is one step ahead.

Left: The Standard, Los Angeles. Below: Chateau Marmont, Hollywood.

Boulevard you are immediately drawn into the comfy "conversation pit" that is literally encased from floor to ceiling in light gray shag carpeting (a clever way to cut down on the noise from both the street and hard surfaces in the rest of the space). The supple ultra-suede chairs look (and feel) like giant pillows, beckoning you to sit, rest, and stay awhile. The lobby provides the perfect voyeuristic environment, not just because of the famous vitrine, or glass tank, behind the front desk that is usually filled with a live model, but also because of the clear sightlines to the pool, "Joshua Tree" bar, elevators, and 24-hour diner.

This spring Balazs opened a new Standard in downtown Los Angeles. With a healthy mix of corporate folk, celebrities, and artists, the Standard downtown has already shown up in Vanity Fair, the New York Times Styles section and the Los Angeles Times. Morphed from the former headquarters of the Superior Oil Company, Balazs built upon the sleek vocabulary of late 70's corporate architecture, a time when clients like Superior Oil hired gifted architects to craft their identities. He plays with the notion of "corporation" throughout the entrance and lobby with the addition of a slightly facetious "Standard Holdings" map of the world that is a nod to Gio Ponti and by retaining the Superior Oil's 15-time-zone stainless clock. By moving the main entrance off Flower Street to Hope Street,

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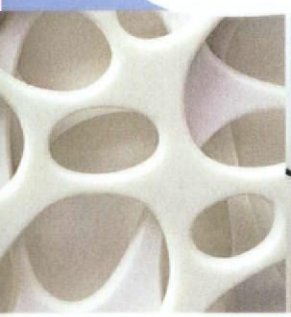
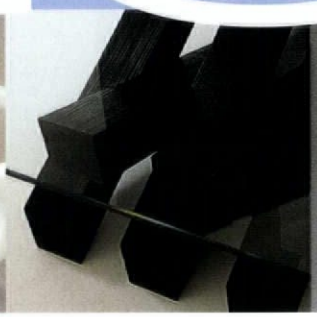
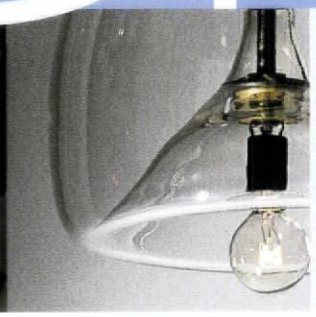
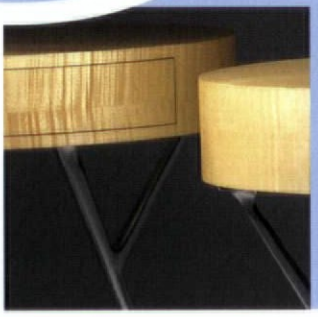




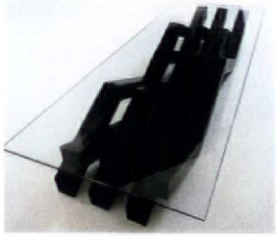


playing with the practical side of art

by Lisa Rosen

TAKING A LOOK AT A GROUP OF CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE AND LIGHTING DESIGNERS invariably leads to a search for common ground. But other than sharing a base in LA (with a couple of part timers in the mix), the crew on the following pages has distinct perspectives informing their work. Their backgrounds vary from fine art to design to architecture; their styles might be rooted in theory or take flight with whimsy. They're independent thinkers and creators, and their designs reflect the wide range of their visions. But for all the variety, and the evolution of their own styles, each of these designers has stayed true to the ideals that first fueled them. Their philosophies may differ, but their commitment unites them. The awards, commissions, museum shows, and acclaim they've all garnered speak to the mark they're making on the world of design. And their passion speaks to their continuing evolution as designers. Coming from the heart to a showroom near you.

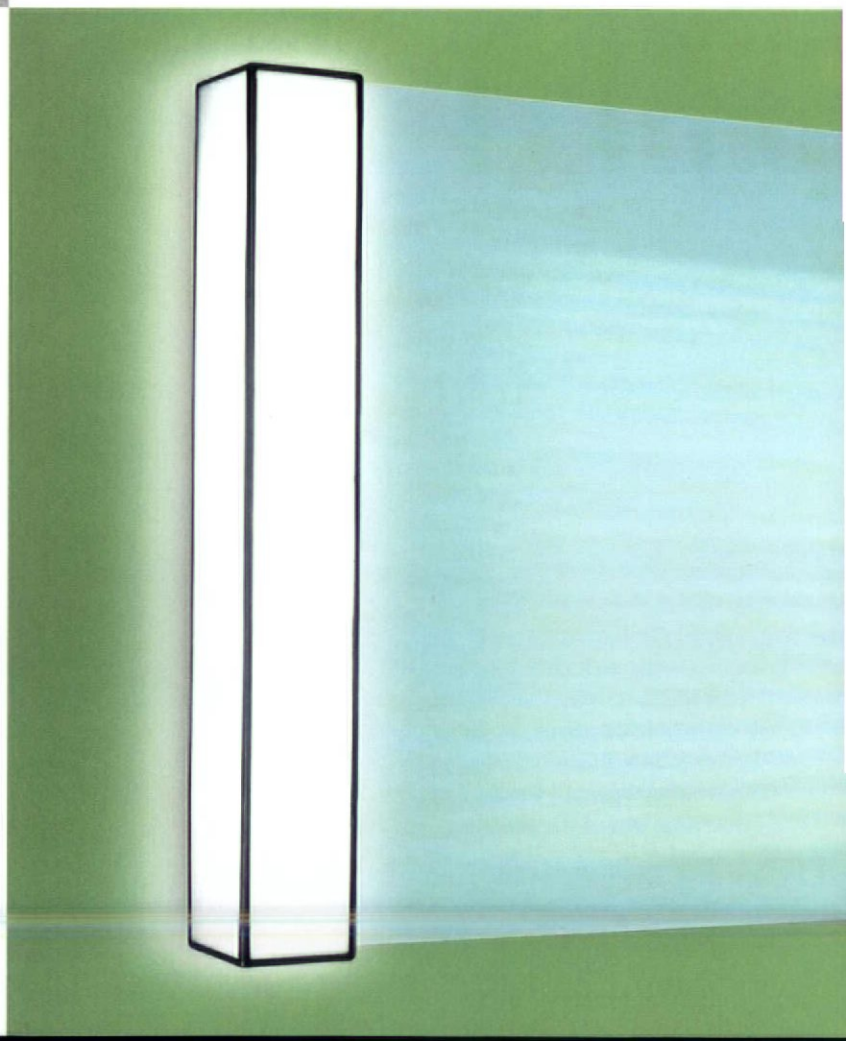
mark harvey



Mark Harvey is a British designer who divides his time between LA and England. His work is informed by a background as analytical as it is artistic. He studied anthropology at Cambridge, with an interest in language and translation, while also painting and sculpting in a very expressionist style. The career choices didn't appeal: PhD, investment banking, or life as an artist with its accompanying abject poverty. Serendipitously, a friend had just bought a new home, and asked him to build the furniture for it. "It struck me that furniture, which etymologically just means to provide content, was a very interesting medium in which to work. You can deliver a sophisticated message in a mundane package." He's failed on that point; the work could never be considered mundane. Harvey draws metaphors from music and poetry to subtly inform his work. The resulting pieces have a deep sense of serenity to them. "I thought furniture was great because all art ultimately becomes furniture," Harvey notes. "You buy a piece from a gallery and hang it on the wall; it's something to consume and display." With furniture, "you get the piece into somebody's house, and you've got twenty years of communication, provided you've done your job."

ron rezek

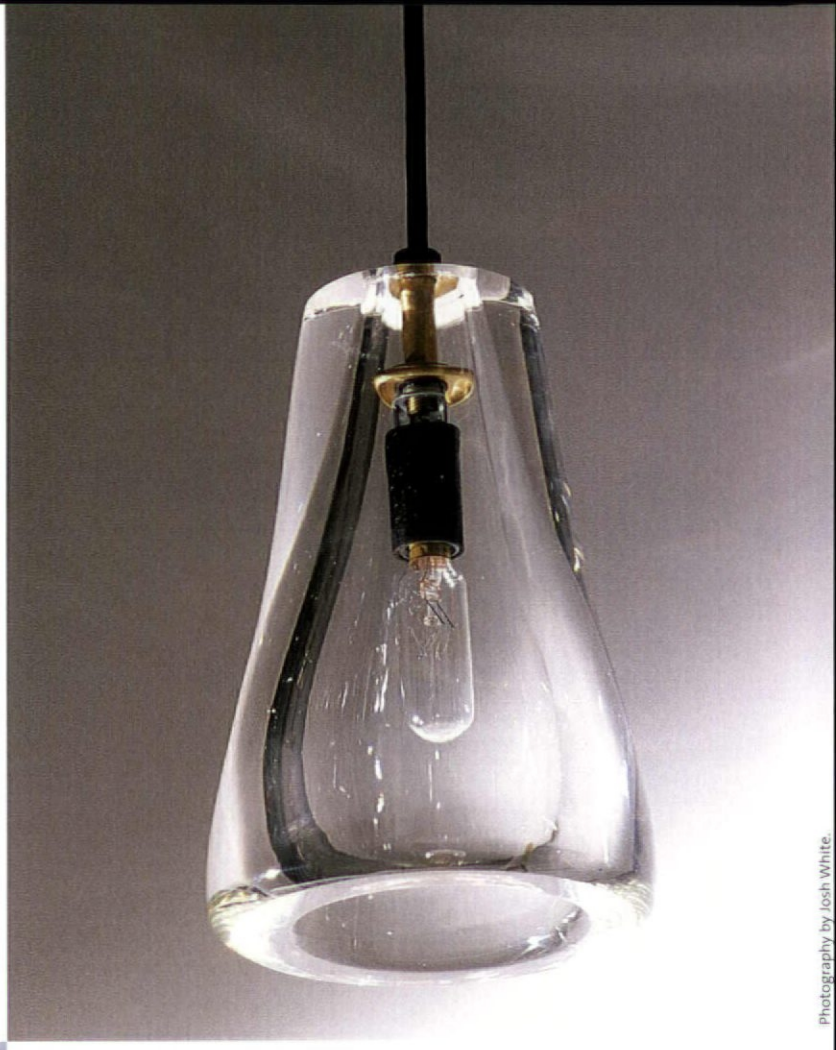
Ron Rezek studied industrial design at UCLA, and worked for Deborah Sussman, Don Chadwick, and Frank Gehry's studio, so his lighting design is informed by a background of graphics, architecture, and product design. The resulting work, since 1977, has been a mix of the aesthetic and the practical. "Probably half the designs just pop out of my head as an inspiration and the other half I consciously design to a product-need category." With partner Artimede, he's been consciously working to get the edge on the lighting of the future—fluorescent. He's passionate about teaching the public to overcome their prejudices about the lighting that is four times more efficient than incandescent, and is a more accurate light to boot. "If you have a green couch, with incandescent, it's only your brain that remembers it as green. But if you have fluomrescent, which inherently has a more complete spectrum, it'll be seen as it really is." His interest has led him to work with the EPA on energy conservation and efficiency improvement. "I like to design within the world of the practical. I find it as much of a challenge to solve a problem as to answer a personal expression." With his designs, and his commitment, he's accomplishing both.



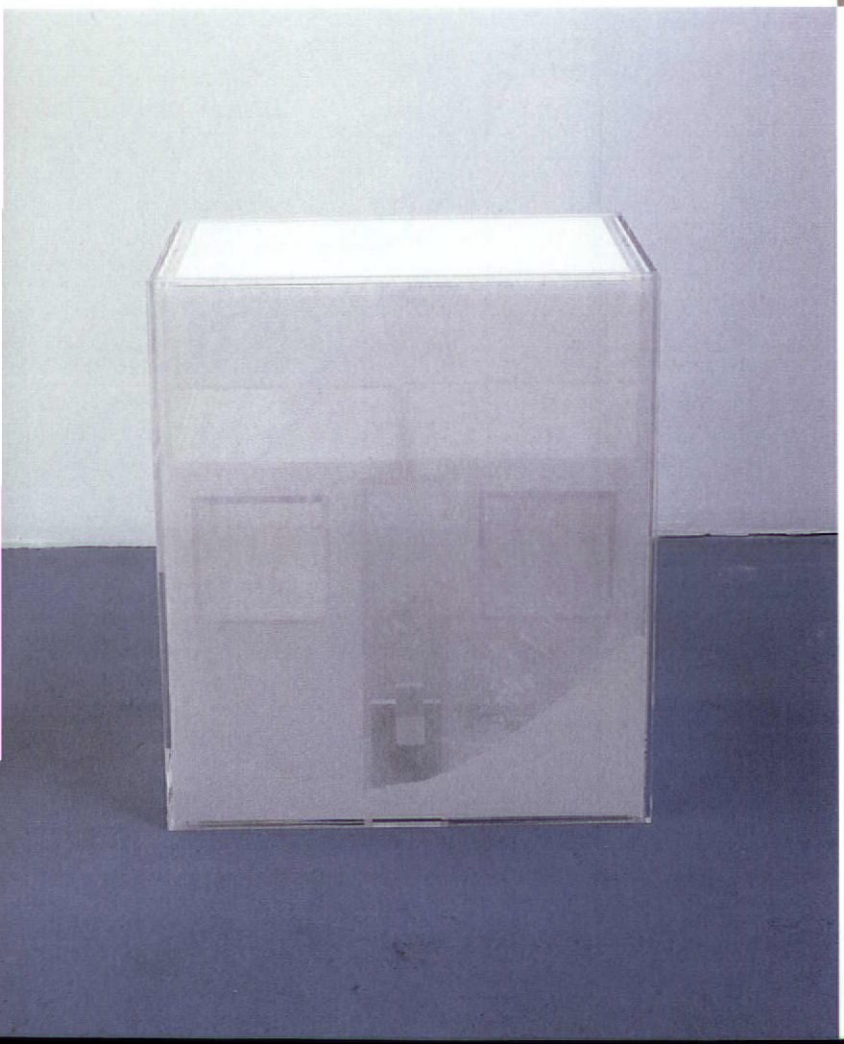
Above: Photography by Andy Rumball. Right: Illusa Bath Strip. Inset: Bolo Pendant. Photography by David Williams.

alison berger

Alison Berger has loved glass since she caught fireflies in jars as a kid. But the route to her present lighting design work was circuitous. She studied glass blowing when she was 15, went to RISD for it, but then couldn't see a way to make a living at what she loved. So she studied cultural anthropology, then architecture, then moved from NY to LA to work with Frank Gehry, then switched to set design for videos. She started making glass components for the sets, and actors and directors started asking to buy the atmospheric pieces. "In a very passive-aggressive, unbeknownst to me self-serving way it led me to do more and more glass." She finally made one more switch, to creating her own line of glass objects, informed as much by the history of glass work as those firefly jars. She sees imperfections as "perfect aspects of the glass, the way wood has grain." Her work has bubbles, and marks from the tools. "What's fascinating about glass blowing is that the same tools are being used now that the Phoenicians used, it hasn't improved since then. When they figured it out, they figured it out."



Photography by Josh White.



elizabeth paige-smith

Elizabeth Paige-Smith gives a passionate tour of her latest piece, which premiered this May at ICFF. Her working title is Amore More, "because it's like More Love. When you approach it, it's just this translucent box shape, made in acrylic, encapsulating loose resin pigment powder. It's a sculptural piece that unfolds, sort of in a puzzle shape, so that it conforms into one singular object. Then as the couple approaches it, they separate the stools from the table, and immerse themselves in conversation." The design encapsulates the couple's legs, so they're forced to face each other and focus. "It's about bringing people together on a very intimate level." Since she began designing in 1997 Paige-Smith's work has received a lot of focused attention. Her molded fiberglass red-hot nude chair is presently featured in the show "Skin" at Cooper Hewitt in New York. "I keep thinking about what is significant socially and historically in terms of materials and design, and how do those apply to our everyday lives. Who is it I'm designing for?" The collectors, mainly, though she sees that as a result of her methods and processes rather than an intended goal. As an example, she points out the success of her inexpensive "kitty pod" cat bed that's been selling like crazy. "Where the work ends up is where it ends up." Be that a museum or a pet bower, the results pale next to the process.

Left: Embrace.

roy mcmakin

In 1996 Roy McMakin received the coveted commission to create the furniture and interior design at the new Getty Center. Though he knew it was a good job with great clients, "I felt like my life was a failure," he says. McMakin had never studied design—his first pieces had come out of an art installation. Having started his career as an artist who designed furniture, his work had become so acclaimed he was seen as a designer rather than a fine artist. "I've spent the last five years getting the world to try to embrace what I do more the way I see what I do." The process has been a success. The Museum of Contemporary Art will show his work this Fall. He finds his furniture, sculpture, and architecture all come from the same creative source; the distinction coming in the way the work sits in the world. And the furniture sits in a world apart. The pieces are inspired by various memories of styles, but since he doesn't research them, "they don't come out looking quite right." McMakin's goal since he began designing was "that people couldn't quite tell when it was from, or what I was referring to." This goal still abounds, and is reflected and fulfilled in each tantalizing piece.

Photography by Mark Woods.

david mocarski

Arkkit Forms Design

David Mocarski has been creating furniture in LA for 30 years. After an undergraduate degree in design and communication arts, and a masters in fine arts, he first became involved in experimental art furniture. "The pieces evolved out of a sculptural nature," he said. "I've always been attracted to the Bauhaus and case studies that brought art and design to people in everyday life." So his pieces, while visually extreme, are very functional. His work found an audience in Europe and Japan before the American press discovered him in the 80s. Since then, the pieces have evolved from straight edged, rectilinear designs to a more curvilinear, expressive style. Mocarski is motivated by his own artistic aspirations, and by the technology that helps him experiment with different materials. "The new steel piece was all cut out by computerized laser," he pointed out. "Even five years ago that couldn't be done." It would have been financially prohibitive, and impossible to do by hand. His students at Art Center, where he's been teaching for 25 years, also push him. "They force me by merit to stay right on the edge, because they're very demanding."

Photography by Charles Imsterf

in house

Monty Lawton and Mark Zuckerman

Monty Lawton and Mark Zuckerman of In House came from diverging backgrounds to form a complementary partnership. Lawton had been making furniture since he was 10, then went to art school at Otis Parsons, but after working in sculpture and fine art, found himself drawn back to furniture design. Zuckerman had been creating one-off art pieces, hand painted by his wife Kathryn Michaels, that were collected internationally. When the two met in a design group a dozen years ago, they found they shared a love of modern furniture and the philosophy that fueled it. They decided if they ever had the chance to work together, "we'd design furniture for the masses," Mark said. And they wanted to work in plastic. Thirteen years later, In House is a showroom featuring their pocket chair, recipient of an international bouquet of accolades, and winner of the 2002 Chicago Athaneum Good Design Award. The polycarbonate wonder, available in a variety of translucent colors, made its premiered at ICFF this past May. The tool for the chair alone cost nearly a quarter of a million dollars, and was created locally, in Chatsworth, by Doug Archibald. The pocket chair, along with the other designs they've created, perfectly exemplifies the goals they set out for themselves long ago: "...to put really great designs into the hands of people who wouldn't necessarily be drawn to them."

Photography by Mark Scott.

Sidebar: Shannon Shapiro photo by Pedja Radankovic. Dan Ogassian photo by Joachim Weisel.

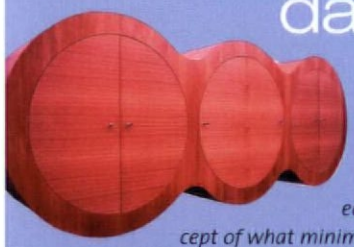
new ON THE BLOCK

shannon shapiro

Moth Design

Shannon Shapiro of Moth Design went to Cal Arts, graduating in 1996. She received a grant for a year to do a public art project. At the end of the year, with no money and no work to sell—her medium at the time was landscape and dirt—she realized "I'd never make anything off my art, I have to get a job." She worked as a photo stylist for celebrity magazines, which segued into interior design work for said celebs. As she tells her clients, "My philosophy is that you could do a shack in the woods, and if you put beautiful lighting in, you wouldn't have to do anything else." When shopping for lighting fixtures for client Kirsten Dunst, she fell for vintage lights but couldn't find enough of them, so she decided to create her own. The extravagance of designer Tony Duquette struck her as perfect for her young clients, enamored as they were of the Hollywood era of the 30s and 40s. The Kiki coral (named for Dunst) and subsequent Lucite designs "are all making fun of decorative objects, of a sort of pretentiousness that interior design can be, and bringing it down to earth." Not wanting to destroy the natural environment, she made the 'coral' out of steel, warping it into a graceful shape. Though she doesn't consider the work art, she finds the boundaries often blur, to her amusement. When the sconce appeared in Architectural Digest, *the magazine received calls asking for the "sculpture".*

dan ogassian



Mobius Zero

Mobius refers to the infinite, zero to the minimal, and the goal of designer Dan Ogassian is to merge those two concepts in his work. mobius zero's edamame cabinet exemplifies his concept of what minimalism is—"something natural, organic, clutter-free, and womblike," he explains. "Basically I'm taking a look at organic forms and creating them with a modern flair." In coalescing the curvilinear with rectilinear, as seen in the edamame piece, Ogassian wants nothing less than to reinvent what is modern. It should be warm, easy to live with, extremely comfortable, "not like a sterile dental environment."

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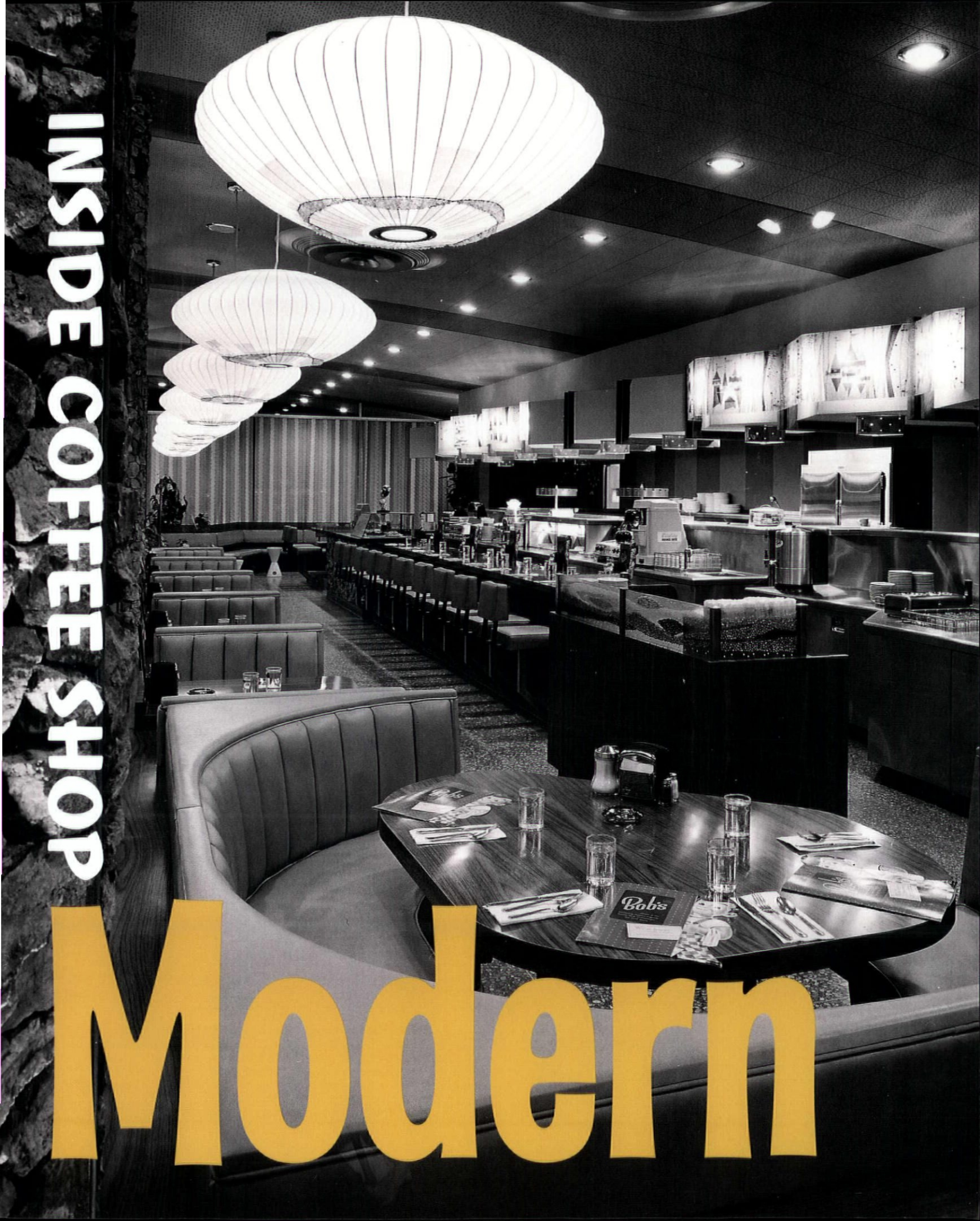

INSIDE COFFEE SHOP

Modern

The Interiors of Armet & Davis

By John English
Photography by Jack Laxer

THE LATE NINETEEN FORTIES WAS AN EXTREMELY dynamic time in the history of Los Angeles. The region's industrial infrastructure had developed during World War II establishing it as the capitol of the defense industry for the next 40 years. During this period Los Angeles experienced an acceleration of creativity and innovation in industry, architecture and the arts. Designers were experimenting with new materials such as plastic laminates, alloys, plate glass and industrialized structural systems and technologies recently made available by the war effort. It was in this climate that the Architectural firm of Armet & Davis first began practicing. Louis Armet and Eldon Davis were classmates at the USC School of Architecture in the late 1930s, graduating in 1939 and 1943 respectively. They formed a partnership in 1947, and began to focus on restaurants, car washes, bowling alleys, drive-ins, and other retail establishments that flourished along the commercial strips of post war Los Angeles. Ultimately it was the modern California coffee shop or "Googie" coffee shop that would become their major contribution to twentieth century American architecture.

The Googie coffee shops of post war Los Angeles are most recognized for their outrageous rooflines and wildly arresting neon signs. Designed to attract passing motorists traveling at 35 to 45 miles per hour, they set the style for Googie architecture, that quintessential Southern California look of modern primitive: both Wrightian organic, and space age modern. Or as author and critic Alan Hess has said, where the Jetsons meet the Flintstones. However the interior spaces of these dynamic buildings are equally if not more important.

Armet & Davis developed a formula for dealing with the strict guidelines prescribed by the needs of their clients in the restaurant industry: Air circulation, strategically placed service stations, lighting, seating, counter areas, traffic flow, cooking, food service, all were carefully considered within the complex operational/functional requirements of a high volume state of the art restaurant facility. Beyond this template the firm could focus on site-specific theming and other elements tailored to each client's project. The result was a dynamic Modern architecture that utilized a whole new design vocabulary, and that uniquely adapted the needs of the post war automobile environment and the suburban development it fostered.

Left: Bob's Big Boy, 1958, Garden Grove Boulevard, Garden Grove (demolished)

Top right: Huddle (demolished)

Bottom right: Norm's 1958, Culver City (demolished)

While praising the work of the Case Study House program and other residential Modern architects working in Los Angeles at the time, high art architectural publications of the day denounced Googie (and the work of Armet & Davis) as excessive, self conscious and ephemeral. Ironically many of the design characteristics of Modern residential interiors could be found in the coffee shops of Armet & Davis: open floor plans, plate glass walls that blurred interior and exterior spaces, built in seating and storage, free form landscaping and unique lighting schemes. The boldly simplified forms of Eames chairs and George Nelson lamps seem inseparable from the interiors of mid-century modern houses while these design elements were integral to coffee shop modern as well.

The success of the coffee shops was due to a strong collaboration between the architects, designers and subcontractors. Initial inspiration for the projects came from talented sketch artists employed to illustrate the design intent of a restaurant project. Lee Linton, a Hollywood set designer, did particularly expressive renderings with exaggerated perspective and a kinetic, stylistic approach, where even people appear as extensions of the architecture. His renderings suggested the look of many projects during the late fifties.

This creative team was further enhanced by Helen Fong, a Chinese American woman hired in 1952. Fong graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1949 with a masters in architecture and planning. She was one of four women in her graduating class and the only minority. She was largely responsible for Pann's coffee shop in the Westchester area of Los Angeles where she was concerned with what she called "interior architecture". Carefully planning elements spatially she introduced a suspended canopy over the counter seating area, finished with bands of exposed brown refrigeration cork, a material that Eldon Davis borrowed directly from it's industrial application. Fong said that she wanted the canopy low enough to give diners a more intimate feeling of space, below the expansive trapezoidal roof. The color scheme at Pann's combined red pink vinyl for the booths and white for the counter stools with a floor of black, white and beige speckled terrazzo and pink cloth wall paper. Suspended diamond shaped light fixtures of translucent white plastic, illuminate booths and reflect in angled walls of glass at the corners of the room.

Helen Fong worked closely with artists Hans and Betsy Werner a husband and wife team that produced stylized and abstract expressionist artwork and decorative fixtures for many Armet & Davis buildings. Working with welded metal, ceramic and experimenting with cast plastic resin & fiberglass they fashioned translucent light sconces, room dividers, door pulls and push plates. The Werners were instrumental in realizing the site-specific themes that Armet & Davis incorporated into many of their restaurant projects during the late fifties and early sixties.

The boldly simplified forms of Eames chairs and George Nelson lamps seem inseparable from the interiors of mid-century modern houses while these design elements were integral to coffee shop modern as well.

Left: Stanley Burke's, 1958, Van Nuys Boulevard, Van Nuys (now Lamplighter)

Below: Dimy's, 1956, Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach (demolished)

Below: (top) Ship's (screen detail), 1967, La Cienega & Olympic, Los Angeles (demolished).
(bottom): Holiday Bowl (Saki Ba bar) 1958, Crenshaw Boulevard, Los Angeles

Right: Romeo's Times Square (now Johnie's) 1955, Fairfax & Wilshire, Los Angeles

John English.

Helen Fong was also responsible for much of the design of the Holiday Bowl in the Crenshaw district of Los Angeles. Bowling alleys were a natural extension of the coffee shop commissions the firm was already executing. Modern bowling alleys were expansive buildings that housed not only bowling lanes and equipment but also a coffee shop, cocktail lounge, banquet facilities and meeting rooms, functions/programs that Armet & Davis were proficient in.The Holiday Bowl employed a Japanese modern theme reflecting the Japanese American owners and the community of the Crenshaw district. The coffee shop was a straightforward modern space with white George Nelson lamps and fiberglass Eames chairs wrapped with orange vinyl. The cocktail lounge called the Saki-Ba (guttural for sake bar) featured a relief mural behind the bar depicting traditional costumes and cultures of the Pacific Rim, while the ceiling featured abstractions of Japanese folk woodwork.

By the late 1960s and early 70s the floating cantilevered roofs and bright modern spaces of coffee shop Modern gave way to revival buildings with shingled mansard roofs and exposed dark wood interiors accented by plastic stained glass booth dividers. Armet & Davis re-interpreted the California Coffee Shop responding to changing trends and tastes in American popular culture. This new direction would become known in the restaurant industry as the "Warmed Up Coffee Shop". Ship's La Cienega built in 1968 was a transitional "warmed up" design resembling an exaggerated suburban ranch house from the period. The interior featured many of the now standard Armet & Davis elements combining natural and synthetic materials such as stone, glass, Formica, stainless steel and terrazzo floors, but anticipated a changing aesthetic with dark green Eames chairs; basket light fixtures constructed of alternating strips of dark wood and orange and amber plexi-glass; and carved wood room dividers inlaid with colored plastic resin in mustards and oranges.

For decades Los Angeles took for granted the seminal architecture of Armet & Davis. Now only a few examples survive in the city they are indigenous to. As larger corporatization and cost cutting trends became an increasing factor in the restaurant industry, the custom coffee shops evolved into more restrained, standardized designs. Eventually during the 1980s many existing coffee shops were remodeled with green awnings and brass railings. The Los Angeles Conservancy's Modern Committee and other historic preservation groups have been fighting to save the remaining examples of Armet & Davis' work from demolition and insensitive re-modeling. They have achieved some success: the Holiday Bowl was recently designated a Cultural Heritage Monument by the City of Los Angeles and Pann's coffee shop, while not recognized formally, has been sensitively rehabilitated by it's owner and represents one of the most intact examples of their work. Recently a new generation of Los Angeles residents as well as visitors have been rediscovering the striking interiors of the remaining Armet & Davis coffee shops. These buildings are part of the experimental tradition of architecture in Los Angeles in the twentieth century, and through them we can learn from that tradition and connect with a time when Los Angeles was modern, when Los Angeles was the future. (Armet Davis & Newlove still practices in Santa Monica)

Armet & Davis re-interpreted the California Coffee Shop responding to changing trends and tastes in American popular culture. This new direction would become known in the restaurant industry as the "Warmed Up Coffee Shop".

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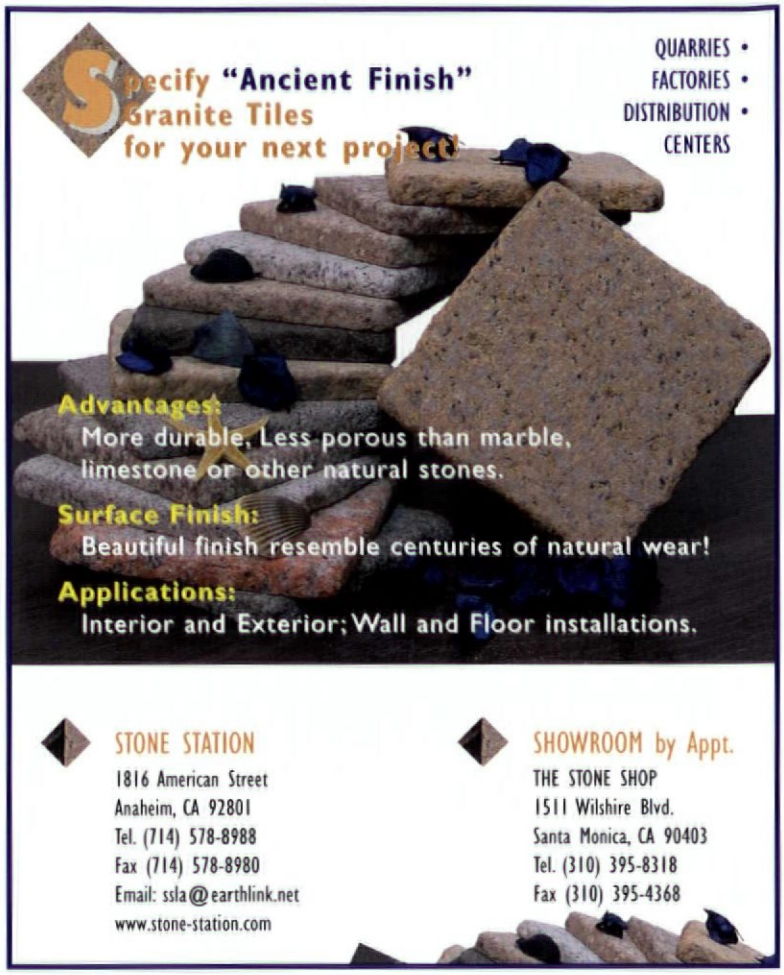

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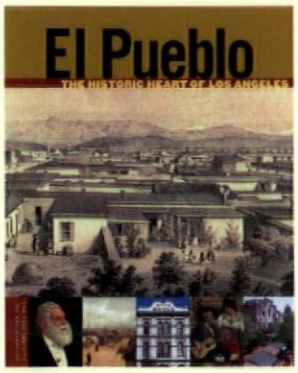

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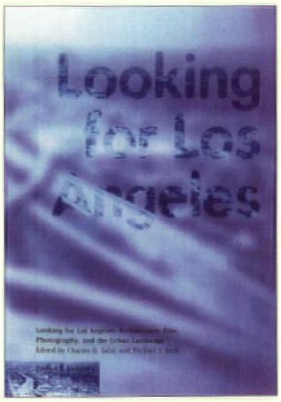

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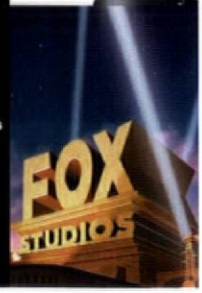

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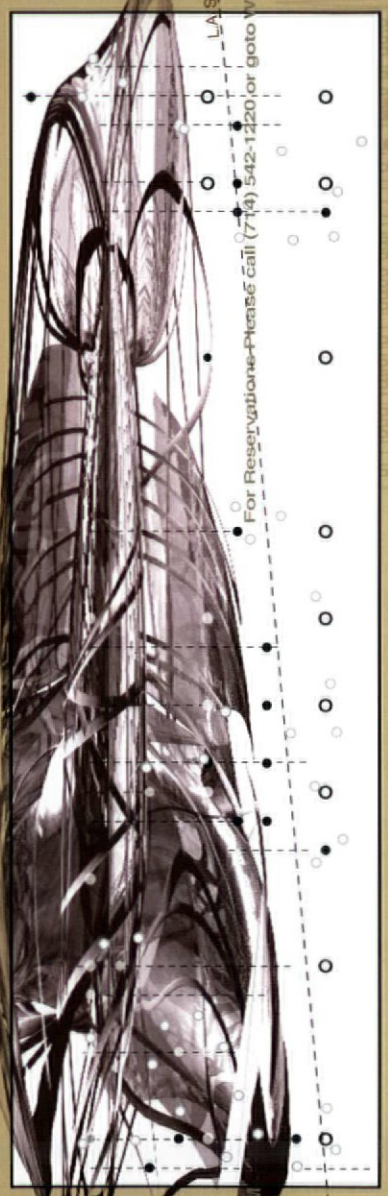

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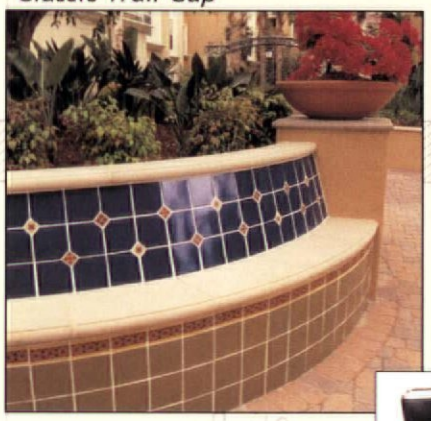

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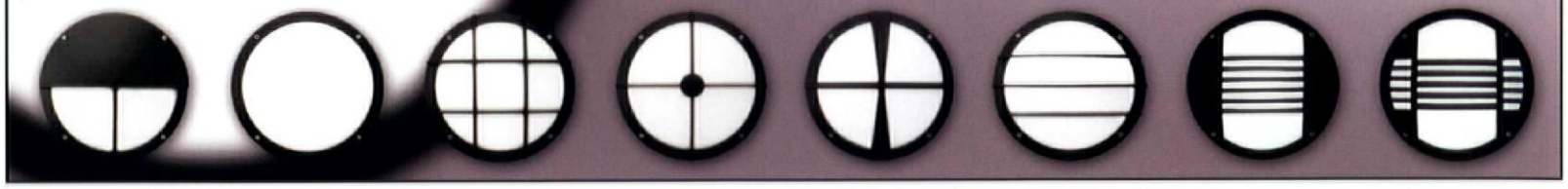

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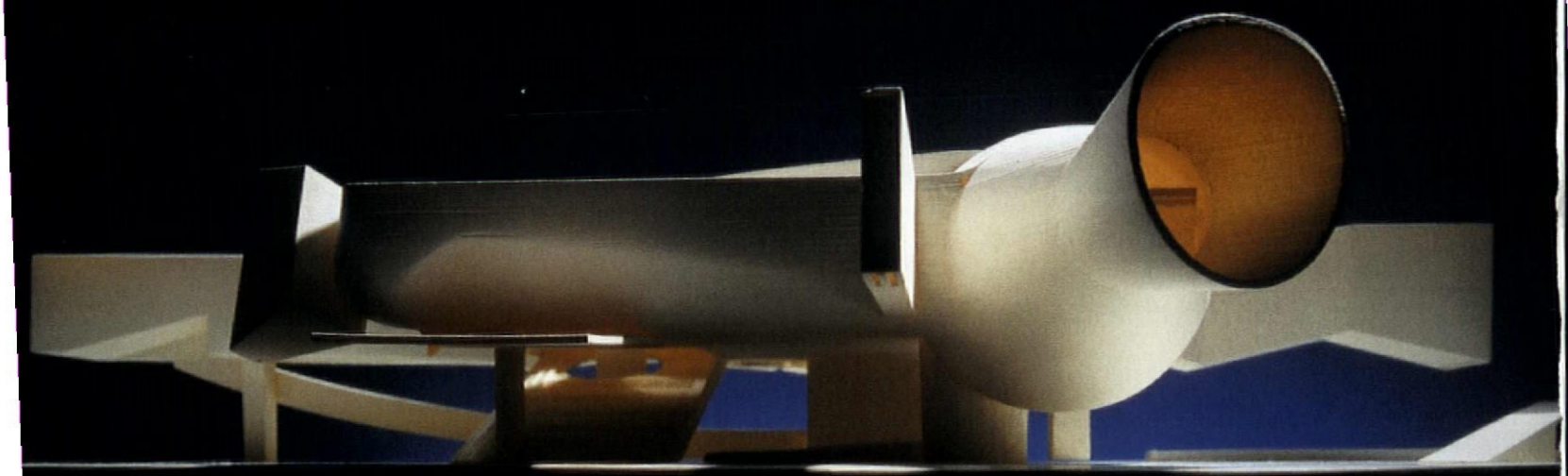
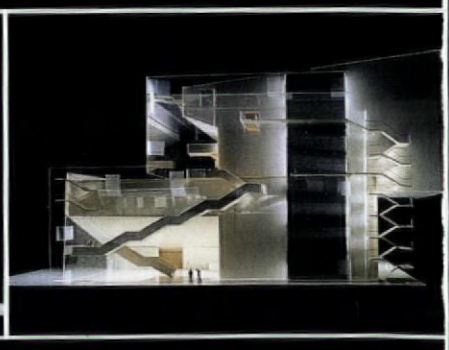


Zugmann/COOP HIMMELB(L)AU

The decades-long collaboration between photographer Gerald Zugmann and the Austrian avant-garde duo Wolf D. Prix and Helmut Swiczinsky takes form in the MAK Center's exhibition *Gerald Zugmann: Blue Universe, Architectural Manifestos by COOP HIMMELB(L)AU*. Self described as "post-industrial expressionists", the firm's working and thinking process is explored through interpretive photographs of 30 projects, as well as four original architectural models. The exhibition ends September 8.
MAK Center, 835 N. Kings Road, 323-651-1510.



Photography by Gerald Zugmann.

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"Why have an attic? It's a waste."

Roof: *Almost the entire rooftop is in use — "Why have an attic?" Hertz asks. "It's a waste." Like Gehry, he made up for the building's displacement of square footage at ground level with private, sunny, airy rooftop space. In fact, there are multiple discrete spaces of different sizes and elevations, reflecting the complex plan of the interior. Just off the master bedroom is a covered patio that honors Schindler's famed sleeping basket. Other roofs support a spa, a greenhouse, a miniature driving range and the solar panels and heat exchanger shown here. This twenty-panel field provides 70% of the house's heat.*

Bathroom: *The kitchens and baths make extensive use of Syndecrete, a finish concrete Hertz developed that contains at least 41% reclaimed material. Here it forms shower tiles laid to create a rough, undulating surface. While he had perfected Syndecrete technically, he had never used it himself, so he came to know how the material really performed. Even the light and plumbing fixtures are learning tools. Boffi provided the fixtures for the new addition— where clients can test the sculptural fixtures and fittings for themselves.*

David Hertz's intention, when he and his wife set about building their own house on an empty 40 foot by 90 foot lot in Venice, California, was to further develop his career-long investigations into sustainable design and materials. And this he did. But the real development has come about through actually living in the house and experiencing the product of his philosophies first hand. He considers it invaluable to his growth as a client's architect and also helpful to the expansion of his design repertoire. He was soon able to build what he had learned into an extension on the lot next door, which is just now reaching completion.

Façade (opoosite page): *The main house looks out over a Venice side street; the new addition sits a little farther back, to the left. Hertz's intimate knowledge of the neighborhood allowed him to design environmental solutions that take advantage of specific local conditions, such as prevailing wind patterns. Perhaps the single largest experiment was the passive solar techniques he employed throughout. Given all the windows he "expected a hotbox," but the mirror glass turned out to be extremely effective — they don't even use the whole-house exhaust fans he installed. At the same time, the initial cost was much higher than expected. In response to budget concerns, the couple built all the doors and windows themselves.*

New wing (above):*The design of the addition was informed not only by experience from the old house, but ideas Hertz collected on a trip to Bali. In particular, he decided to go further to blur the distinction been inside and outside. Thus the plane of the addition's first floor extends to the pool with a minimal threshold, and the doors pocket completely. The use of brace frames also opens the space up. Craft is another element realized more fully in the new building. The couple was unhappy with the cheap, fir windows in the old house, so they used harvested mahogany this time. Hertz also installed an "engineer-free" stair that he designed and built himself. His neighbor, Art Lust of Architectural Sound Design, incorporated the entire sound system into the building, using structural cavities. The house has thus been a laboratory for his ideas as well.*

David Hertz

"...experiencing the product of his philosophies firsthand."

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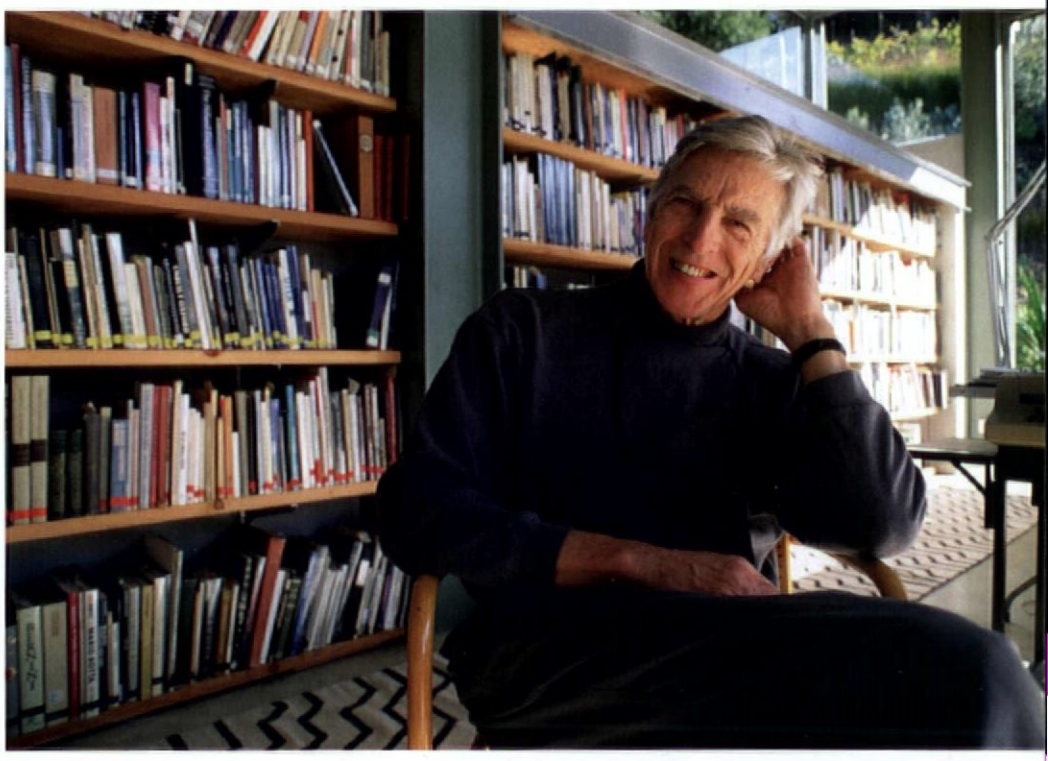
"The entire house can be opened in just a few minutes..."

Interior (bottom right): *The entire house can be opened in just a few minutes, connecting you intimately with the nearby sky and distant ocean. Myers mentions in passing that an early scheme involved a single airplane hanger door across the entire sixty-foot façade. "How would you open that?" asks his wife, Vicki, somewhat suspiciously. In cooler weather the main doors can be closed, with the sliding doors on the ends left open for air circulation. He considers radiant heat inappropriate to California's rapid temperature swings (it's slow to respond) so he installed a compartmentalized heat pump. With little touches, like custom chain hooks, he elevated the catalogue garage doors, and other industrial elements, to a level of fine detail.*

Photographs by Russ Widstrand / Widstock.com

Bathroom (above): *The couple wanted to build the house for as little money as possible, to prove its value as a competitor to the typical, ugly wood-frame house. To this end they served as their own contractors, and kept detailing to a minimum. Restricting details to a select few directly increased their production quality. The finely joined steel and cleanly finished concrete are then left to interact directly with the heirloom furnishings and varied artworks, creating spaces like this guest bathroom. Mass-producible, but hardly industrial! The money saved allowed for finer fixtures, which are nevertheless off-the-shelf.*

Barton Myers often cites a maxim of Vince Scully's that modern architecture must, among other things, be prototypical. Barton Myers believes in prototypes. Indeed, he is one of a handful of architects who has seen a mass-produced housing project to fruition. His own home, a striking composition of concrete, steel and glass nestled high in a canyon near Santa Barbara, California, is built largely of off-the-shelf components. You could almost order one of your very own. The key to mass production, in his mind, is steel construction. With this, his third all-steel house, he comes close to convincing the world.

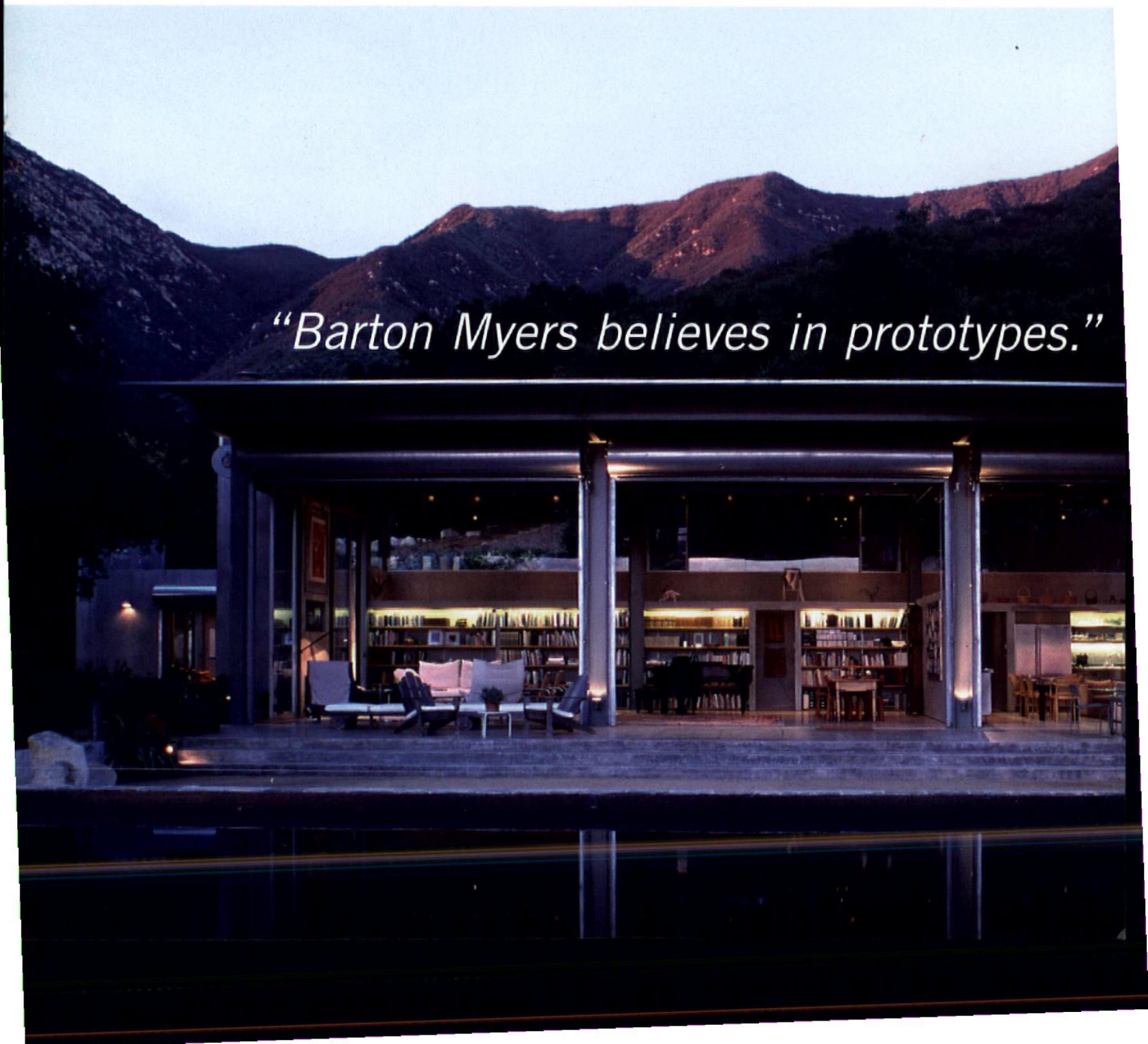


Photographs by Russ Widstrand / Widstock.com

Façade (left): *A desire to achieve a prototypical design was not the only factor determining the form of Myers' home. The site, enclosed within an arroyo yet open to the sea some 1,300 feet below, is prime wildfire country. Myers developed a series of protective measures. The roofs of the guesthouse (foreground), main house and studio (a little farther up the hill) are ponds containing a total of 30,000 gallons. Not only will water roofs not burn, they also serve as fire-fighting reservoirs. In addition, manual steel shutters can be dropped to entirely seal all three buildings within about half an hour.*

Studio (above): *The former Naval test pilot poses in his studio. The open wall to the right presents one of the few on-the-spot changes to the design: he gave up a tack-board wall to retain the view. Through a quirk of the siting, the clerestory above the bookshelves, and its equivalents in the main house and guesthouse, align to provide an uninterrupted line of sight through all three buildings. Behind the studio, the inflammable chaparral has been cut back to a minimum safety radius and the area replanted with olives, blood oranges, fire-slowing cacti and erosion-mitigating vetiver grass.*

Barton Myers



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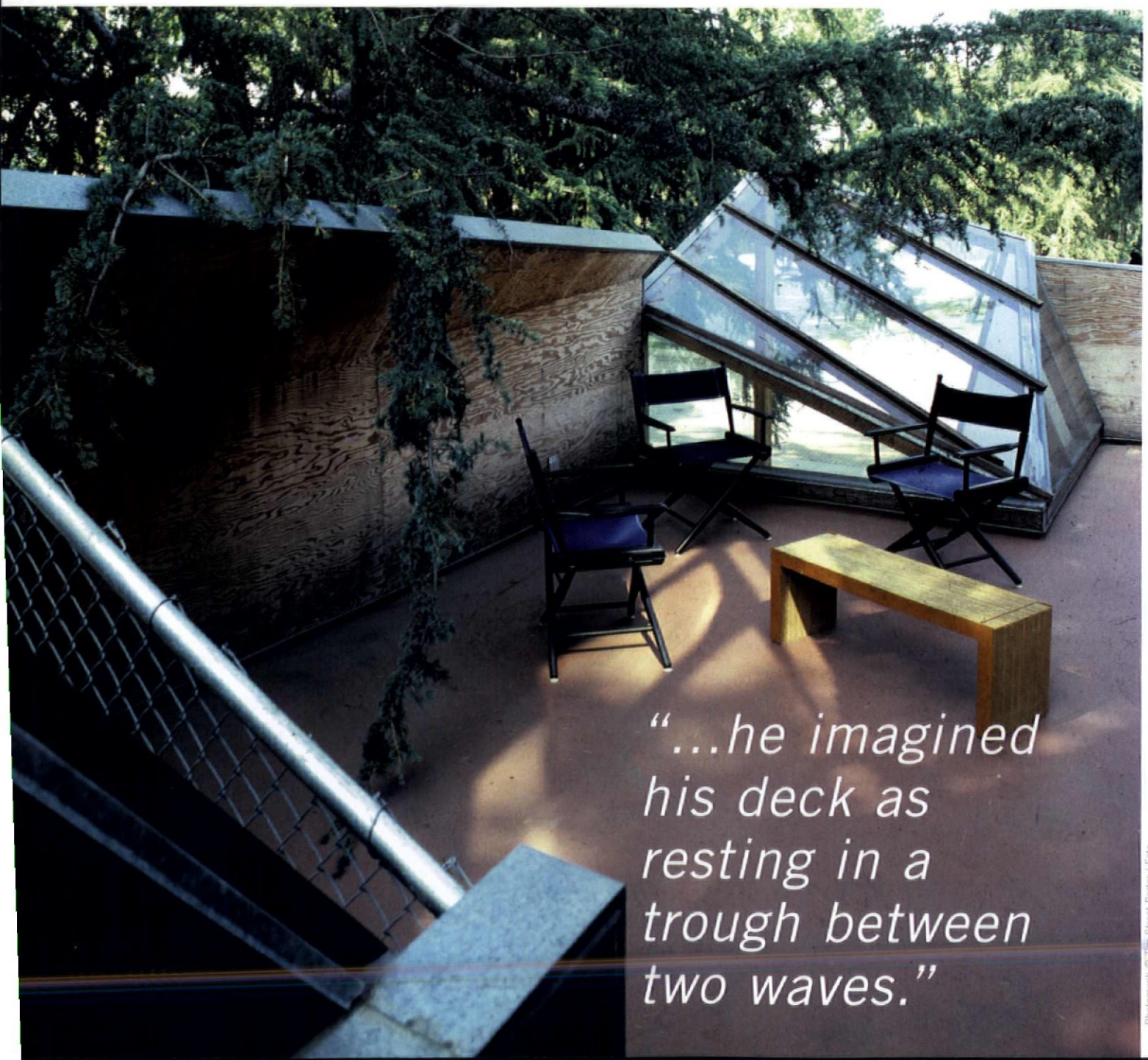
Roof deck: *A deck built atop the addition provides outdoor space that is completely open, yet quite private, up among the Cedars of Lebanon. The slanted glazing just beyond the seating surmounts the dining room, twisted off the room's axis and maximizing the light available to that space. Gehry sought to create sense of movement with this cresting skylight and a similar one rising above the kitchen (just behind the photographer in this image). Between the two he imagined his deck as resting in a trough between two waves.*



"...he imagined his deck as resting in a trough between two waves."

Photograph © Tim Street-Porter / Esto

Frank Gehry has written that he approaches "each building as a sculptural object, a spatial container, a space with light and air, a response to the context and appropriateness of feeling and spirit." This is certainly true of his family's home in Santa Monica, California. The context, when he and his wife bought the house in 1978, was a relatively dense block of single-family homes, with zoning that suggested a future of lot-filling multi-family dwellings. The "spatial container" turned out to be an addition that would encompass the original structure to provide new space for the family and present a new face to the neighborhood. Within this shell he investigated ideas of material and craft. The renovation, as shown here, continues to evolve.

Façade (left): *Investigating his new neighborhood, Gehry soaked in the ambiance, such as it was. He saw plenty of cars up on blocks, camper vans, chainlink fences and concrete block walls. He decided to take these things seriously, to engage them as the local aesthetic. He also noticed the drawn curtains and encroaching multi-family structures that would soon surround his home. In these he saw a challenge to create privacy for his own family with an open neighborliness that seemed to have been forgotten. His solution was a shell addition that used the commonplace materials—with which he was already familiar from previous work—to reflect the neighborhood while not shutting it out.*

Interior view: *In his project synopsis, Gehry writes, "I wanted to preserve the iconic quality of the existing house and I became obsessed with having it appear that the existing structure remained intact, captured inside the new structure and interacting with it." In a sense this was a sort of collaboration between the two structures. Nevertheless, the asbestos siding couldn't stay, so the old house is bare within its flowing new gown. Gehry exposed the structure, in an homage to the craft of building, throughout. The only detailing is found in the pre-existing sash windows still mounted in the original house's now-interior walls.*

Frank Gehry

When a residential project is finished the architect goes home, the experiment, the exploration of ideas, complete. The client moves in and begins their own investigation: is this beautiful, innovative, finely crafted space... livable?

These, the most important data, are often lost. But when an architect builds his or her own house, the feedback loop is complete — the actual performance of the building assessed — and future works benefit. We at LA Architect like architecture that is not only smart and pretty, but also effective. In Boffi we've found a partner that demands the same functional beauty. Together we bring you a special issue that explores how architects use their homes as laboratories.

In the project portfolios that follow you will see how three well-known architects brought their ideas to light. Each came to the task with a strikingly different mindset and worked under a different set of contextual constraints. Frank Gehry had the most theoretical approach, engaging his Santa Monica home in a dialogue with the neighborhood, and indeed with itself. Barton Myers squared off against the threat of wildfires with his dream of a prototypical steel house. Finally, David Hertz pushes his investigations of materials and sustainability in a house that continues to evolve.

Placed together, the resulting buildings seem, at first, as different as their designers. Certain shared elements do come to light, though. All three, for example, evidence the continued sway of a spare modernist aesthetic, eschewing ornament and keeping detailing to a bare minimum. More curiously, each made his roof into a useable space. Maybe not an earthshaking innovation, but how much use do you get out of your roof?

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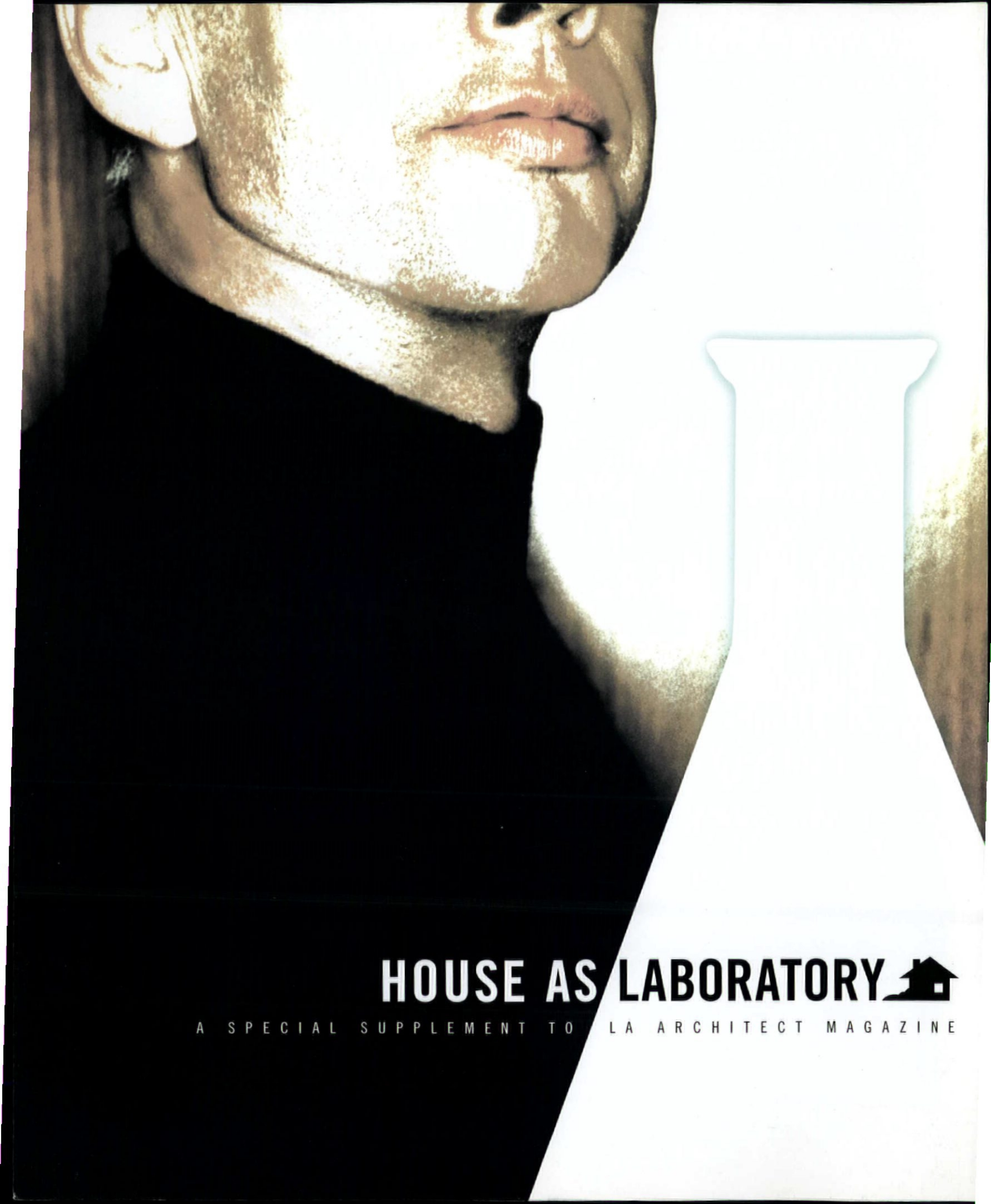

HOUSE AS LABORATORY

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